Commentary

Volume Fifty-four, Number Six, December 1972

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Books in Review:
Sara Sanborn
Roger Starr
Alan Goldfein
John Wain

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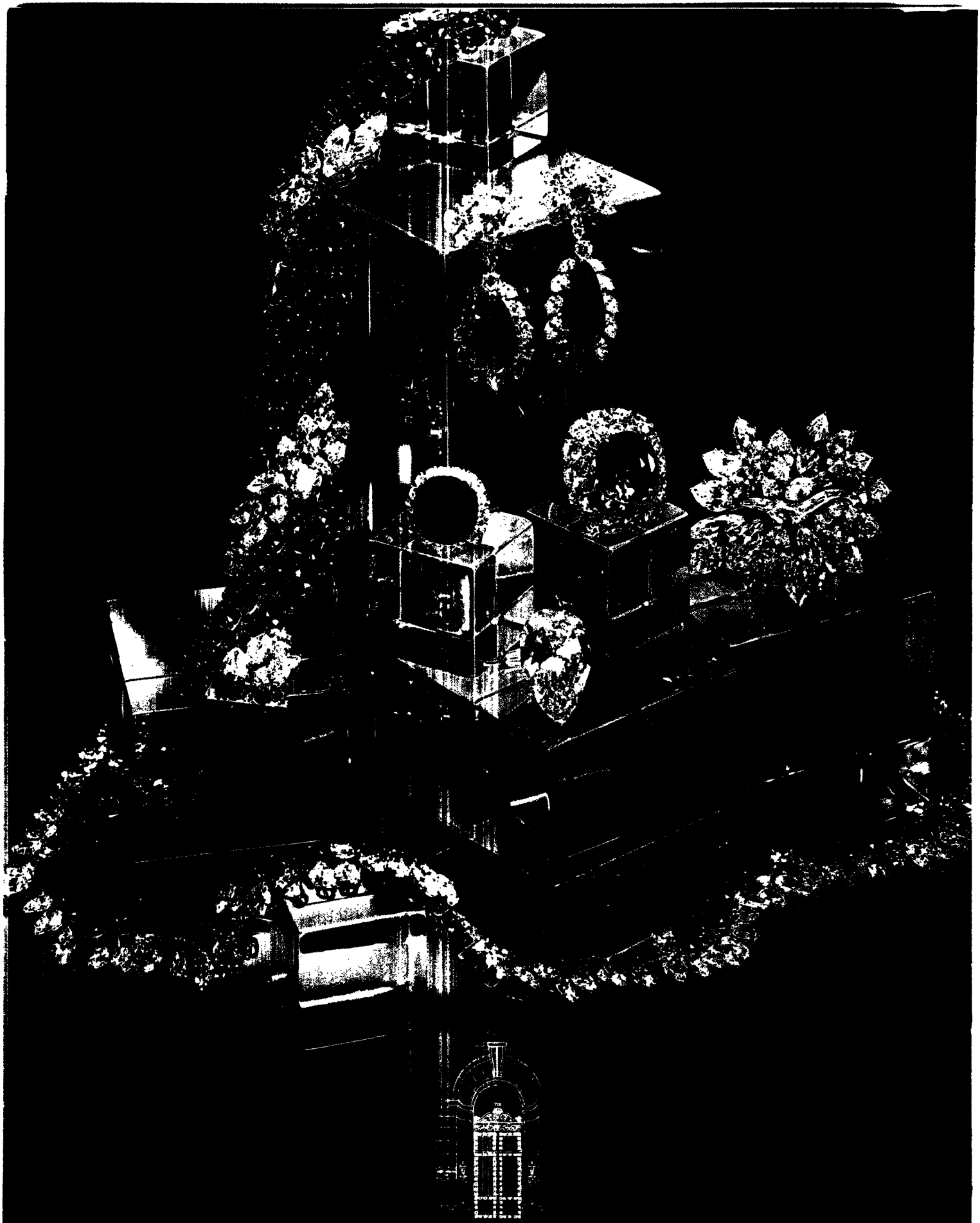

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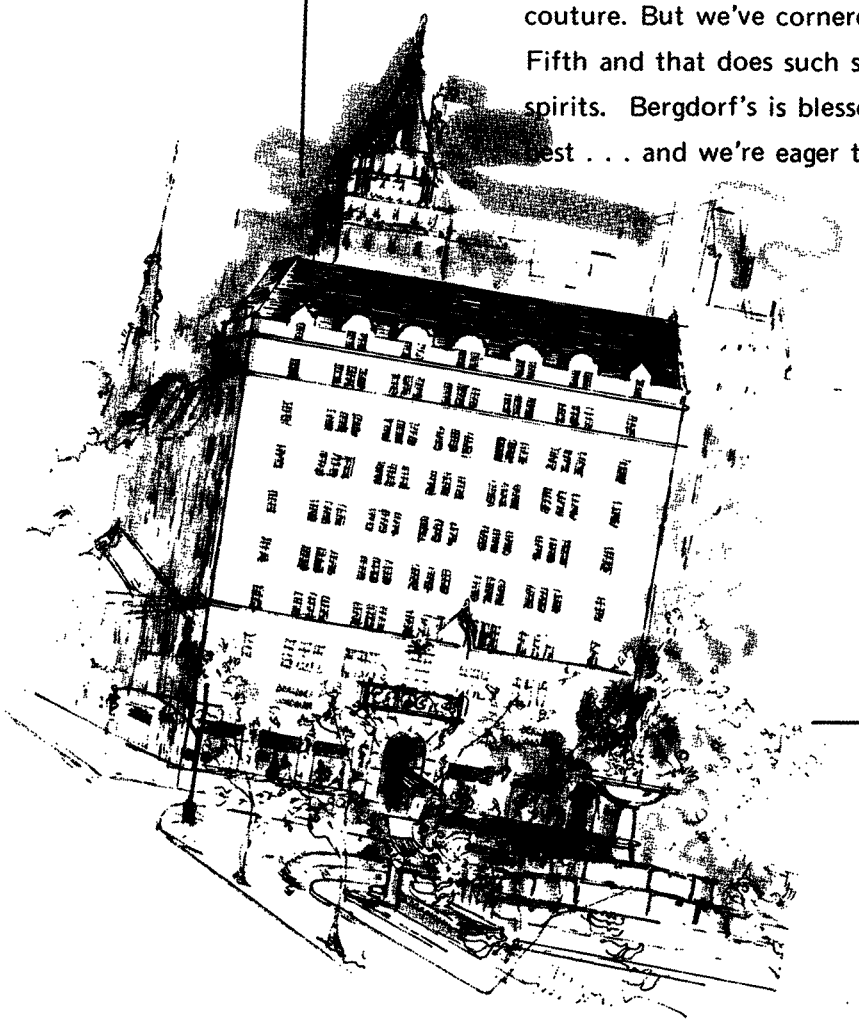

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Commentary

VOLUME 54 NUMBER 6 *DECEMBER 1972*

Articles
41 The Idea of Merit *Paul Seabury*
47 From Auschwitz to Prague: A Memoir *Heda Margolius-Kovály*
55 An Address to the Entering Class at Harvard College, 1972 *Daniel P. Moynihan*
61 On the Soviet Departure from Egypt *Walter Laqueur*
69 Philip Roth Reconsidered *Irving Howe*
78 The New Politics & the Democrats *Penn Kemble and Josh Muravchik*
85 The Question of War Crimes *Joseph W. Bishop, Jr.*

Issues
4 Laureate of the New Class *Norman Podhoretz*

Letters
8 from *Arnold Beichman, Samuel McCracken, Bernard D. Weinryb, Chaim Raphael, Julius Paul, John Slawson, Jack Hirshleifer, Jerome Karabel, Eliot D. Bernat, Milton Himmelfarb, Nan Mizrachi, Edward Grossman, Esther S. Yntema,* and others

Books in Review
94 The Hidden Injuries of Class, by Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb *Sara Sanborn*
98 Time of Need, by William Barrett *John Wain*
103 Ling, by Stanley H. Brown *Roger Starr*
110 Philosophy and Human Nature; A Soul in the Quad, by Kathleen Nott *Alan Goldfein*

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Issues

Laureate of the New Class

Norman Podhoretz

EXCEPT for a detail or two, I agree with everything Irving Howe (p. 69) says about Philip Roth, but I wonder whether the steady growth in Roth's reputation over the past ten years or so is really a function of the decline in the quality of his work. I have no quarrel with Mr. Howe's view that Roth has come to stand very close to the center of our culture; and although I would rate *Portnoy's Complaint* a bit more highly than Mr. Howe does (perhaps because I have not, as he puts it, committed the cruelty of reading it twice), I have no doubt that the general direction Roth has traveled as an artist from *Goodbye, Columbus* in 1959 to *The Breast* in 1972 is down. What I would question, however, is Mr. Howe's delicately phrased suggestion that Roth has become so central a figure on the contemporary scene *because* his work has deteriorated, as though his career were a case of a serious or difficult writer accommodating himself to the tastes of a mass public and achieving popularity in return. The process, I think, has worked in almost exactly the opposite way. Roth is now central not because he has "sold out"—to use the nostalgic term which; I suspect, was at the back of Mr. Howe's mind in considering this particular question—but because in the course of his literary career more and more people have come along who are exactly in tune with the sense of things he has always expressed in his work and who have accordingly and in increasing numbers come to recognize him as their own.

ROTH, as Mr. Howe demonstrates, is a tendentious writer who is always bent on making a point; to which one might add that the point he is bent on making is almost always the same, and has been from the beginning. It is, quite simply, that Americans are disgusting people. Since the Americans Roth writes about are more often than not Jewish, some of his critics have charged him with a special animus against Jews. A case can certainly be made in support of this charge, but I think it is also clear from *Letting Go* and even clearer from *When She Was Good*, not to mention *Our Gang*, that Roth's opinion of non-Jewish Americans, and especially small-town Wasps unredeemed by patrician blood, is scarcely higher than his opinion of American Jews. They are all disgusting to him—the Bassarts no less than the Patimkins, a Lucy Nelson no less than a Sophie Portnoy—and his work is mainly devoted to exploring that disgust.

Sometimes, as in parts of *Goodbye, Columbus* and in scattered passages of *Portnoy's Complaint*, he grinds the faces of his characters with zest and exuberance; sometimes, as in *Letting Go* and *When She Was Good*, he becomes as dreary and tiresome himself as he makes his characters appear. But whether lively or dull, Roth's stories and novels never vary in one significant respect: they never achieve surprise. For their overriding purpose is not to question the standard ideas and attitudes which his readers, as members of the educated class, can with complete confidence be expected to entertain about Americans of every other kind; their purpose is, rather, to reinforce those ideas and attitudes, to offer as it were documentary evidence for the complacent thesis that the country is inhabited exclusively by vulgarians, materialists, boors, and bores. Except, that is, for "us": the author and his readers who join together in celebration of their vast superiority to everyone else around them—although in

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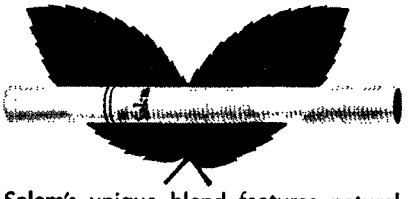

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what, precisely, this alleged superiority consists is very difficult to tell. For what Baruch Hochman, in a passage quoted by Mr. Howe, says of the narrator of *Goodbye, Columbus*—that "It is not at all clear how Neil Klugman, who is so offended at the Patimkins, stands for anything substantially different from what they stand for"—is true of all of Roth's protagonists and of his authorial point of view in general.

A REMARKABLY similar species of snobbery and self-righteousness is, of course, one of the distinctive marks of those members of the professional and technical intelligentsia in America who make up what has come to be known as the New Class. And indeed, there is an intriguing parallel between the ethos of the New Class and the attitudes embodied in the work of Philip Roth. The New Class sees itself, in the words of one of its member-admirers, as a "conscience constituency" motivated only by ideas and ideals, whereas others are driven only by baser impulses and issues "of the stomach." Just so, the authorial point of view in the work of Philip Roth claims for itself a singular sensitivity to things of the spirit (even when, as in the case of Alexander Portnoy's yearning for liberation from all conditions and limits, this sensitivity comes disguised as sexual lust), whereas others are represented as altogether blind to things of the spirit and as caring only for lesser things of the flesh like food and money and material possessions. Or again, although the New Class—as Penn Kemble and Josh Muravchik (p. 78) show in careful and elaborate detail—is capable of supreme ruthlessness in its pursuit of power, it has consistently given its own ambitions, not only for power but for status and wealth as well, the benefit of every conceivable doubt while excoriating or making fun of the needs and wishes of others and putting them always in the most highly unfavorable light. Just so, Roth is forever exempting his protagonists—and, by sympathetic extension, himself and his readers—from the ridicule to which, most often through the device of malicious caricature, everyone else is relentlessly subjected in his work.

MR. HOWE, who I believe has a much better opinion of the spiritual and moral character of the New Class than I have, would probably object to this line of argument. Nevertheless, it does not strike me as fanciful to suggest that Philip Roth owes his centrality to the fact that he so perfectly embodies the ethos of a group which began coming to consciousness of itself as a distinctive social class around the time Roth first appeared on the scene and which has become numerous enough and powerful enough in recent years to move from the margins of our culture into the very mainstream of our political life. The New Class, in short, now constitutes a mass audience in its own right and Roth is the New-Class writer par excellence. No wonder he is such a success. ■

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Letters from Readers

Lies and Truth

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I should like to reply to Samuel McCracken's review of my book, *Nine Lies about America* [Books in Review, August], not only because he has, in several crucial ways, misunderstood my book but also because he taxes me with not having written a different book:

1) Mr. McCracken says that I rest my case on the accusation of genocide against America "almost entirely on a refutation of the charge that the police of America have conspired to wipe out the Black Panthers. But the charge of genocide against America goes well beyond the Black Panther question." I was not using the Black Panther "genocide" falsehood simply to refute the charge of genocide against America. I was asking why such a significant sector of the most prestigious media believed that there *was* such a police plot without first checking it out. Why did this "genocide" lie circulate so successfully for so long? I didn't answer these questions, largely because it would take another book to explain the problem of advocacy journalism in the American press today, but I allowed A. M. Rosenthal, managing editor of the New York *Times*, to answer them in part.

I didn't deal with American treatment of Indians, blacks, and Vietnamese, which Mr. McCracken would have had me do, because genocide means something quite precise. What I was arguing against was the trivialization of the concept of genocide and its transformation into a cheap political epithet; as, for example, a statement by the New York City Urban Fellows (in a 1971 American Assembly document) that, "We recognize that everyday government is a party to genocide by its inaction and the active intent of some of its agents." I didn't go into too many details about black genocide, largely because it doesn't exist, any more than "genocide" exists against North Vietnam. A government which, after all, fires rockets, downs jet planes, holds several thousand Americans prisoner, owns tanks and howitzers, inflicts vast casualties against the soldiers of Japan, France, America, Australia, New Zealand, Korea, and the Philippines, a government which has the strength to refuse to negotiate except on its own terms, is hardly a government whose people are victims of genocide. It is a cruel war and, by now, an absurd war, with all kinds of atrocities on both sides, but when someone calls the war in Vietnam genocide, I ask how many tanks did European Jewry operate and how many rifles did the Katyn forest victims own?

Mr. McCracken says that the cry of genocide against Vietnamese and blacks (allegations with which he does not agree) "present a more substantial problem than that of the Panthers, and are a good deal less easy to dispose of." Among whom? The whole point of the accusation of genocide against America is to make it appear that it is Americans who are genocidal, not merely their government, and that Americans therefore are unredeemable. That is why James Baldwin in his recent *No Name in the Street* can write that Americans are "the most dishonorable and violent people in the world" and why he can play his own little "genocidal" game: "[I]t is not necessary for a black man to hate a white man, or to have any particular feelings about him at all, in order to realize that he must kill him."

Mr. McCracken says the one allegation he does agree with is that genocide was visited on the Indians. Assuming that this was the case, what has it to do with America and Americans today? My ancestors were dodging pogroms in the Ukraine when this was going on. The millions and millions of Americans whose ancestors came from other parts of the world in the 19th and 20th centuries are no more responsible for the massacre of the Indians than Mexicans today are responsible for the Aztecs who made a hecatomb of human hearts to appease the rain gods. Why is all this nonsense brought up now? Why does Earl Ubell, the radio and television commentator, write that "we are a nation with the blood of genocide on our hands"? Why does he ask: "Will white Americans somehow find their way back to the rationale of destroying whole peoples in the name of God, capitalism, and law and order?" Why

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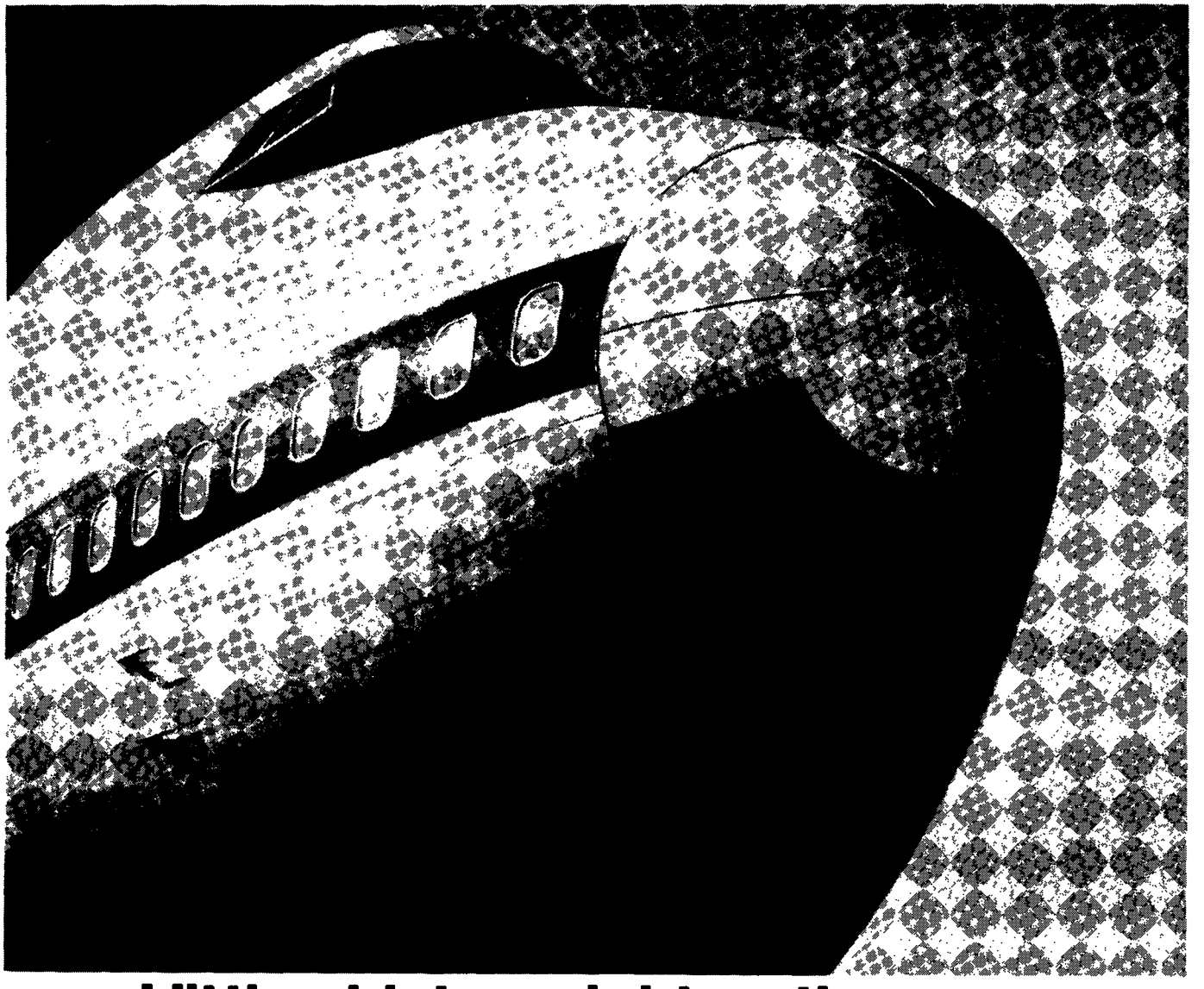

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does he publish such rot? Yet supposing I haven't "disposed" of the problem of genocide against blacks, Indians, and the North Vietnamese? What then? I do not understand the point.

2) My second lie—"the Bomber Left is a moral force"—leads me into difficulties, Mr. McCracken says, because all I do is prove that leftists "countenance from other leftists behavior they will not tolerate from rightists, but what else is new?" Shouldn't this kind of double-standardism, in its latest, post-Stalinist phase, be exposed? If Mr. McCracken's "but-what-else-is-new" judgment is valid criticism, then what point was there in exposing the fellow-traveling Left in the 1930's? After all, this kind of double-standardism goes back to the French Revolution at least, so what else is new? It may be old-hat but it is worth pointing out that a New-Left spokesman a few months ago was defending, after all we've learned, murder with a political purpose. Recently, Professor Staughton Lynd—I am quoting an AP dispatch from Toronto, June 21, 1972—defended the "bombing of a United States Army research building at the University of Wisconsin [as] a political act, no matter how misguided." He (and others unnamed in the story) so testified at the extradition hearing in Canada of a young revolutionary who was charged with "murder, sabotage, destruction of government property, conspiracy, and arson in connection with the bombing in August 1970 which resulted in the death of a physicist." Lynd said, according to the AP dispatch, "the bombing was similar to other such incidents designed to rid universities of complicity with the American government in the Vietnam war. He urged that Canada refuse to send Armstrong back to Wisconsin to stand trial." So what else is new? When a leading historian, a charter member of the critical intelligentsia, defines as a political act the bombing of a building which resulted in the death of an innocent man, it's worth putting it on the record, name, date, and place. That it's been said before and will be said again (do we exculpate COMMENTARY from the charge of "what else is new?")—well, somebody has to supply the raw material for others to purify into theory and motivation.

Far more troubling is Mr. McCracken's argument that while the Bomber Left's belief that they "are rebelling against an illegitimate government . . . does not say much for their intelligence . . . it does not of itself discredit their moral purpose." Without intelligence, there is no rationality and without rationality can there be a "moral purpose"? Moral purpose—for what? Human conduct without intelligence is a defense of the *acte gratuit*, a defense of thinking with the blood. Intelligence and moral purpose are inseparable, otherwise every political assassin and those, like Eldridge Cleaver, who promote assassination, have a moral case. "The scientists involved in espionage," said a lady writer during the 1950's, "have been very few, indeed, and misguided as they may have been, they have acted on principle and not for personal gain." What was *their* moral purpose and what was the moral purpose of the young man whose bomb—unintentionally—killed an innocent physicist ("no physicists are innocent"—the defense rests)? Lynd could easily

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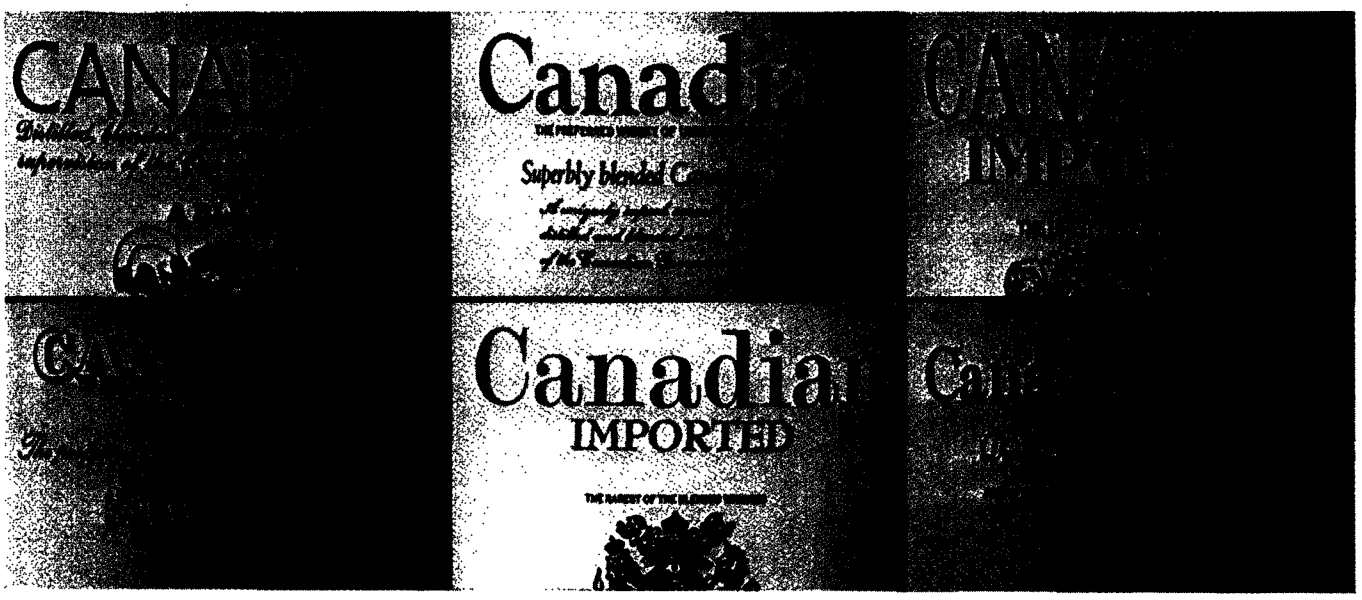

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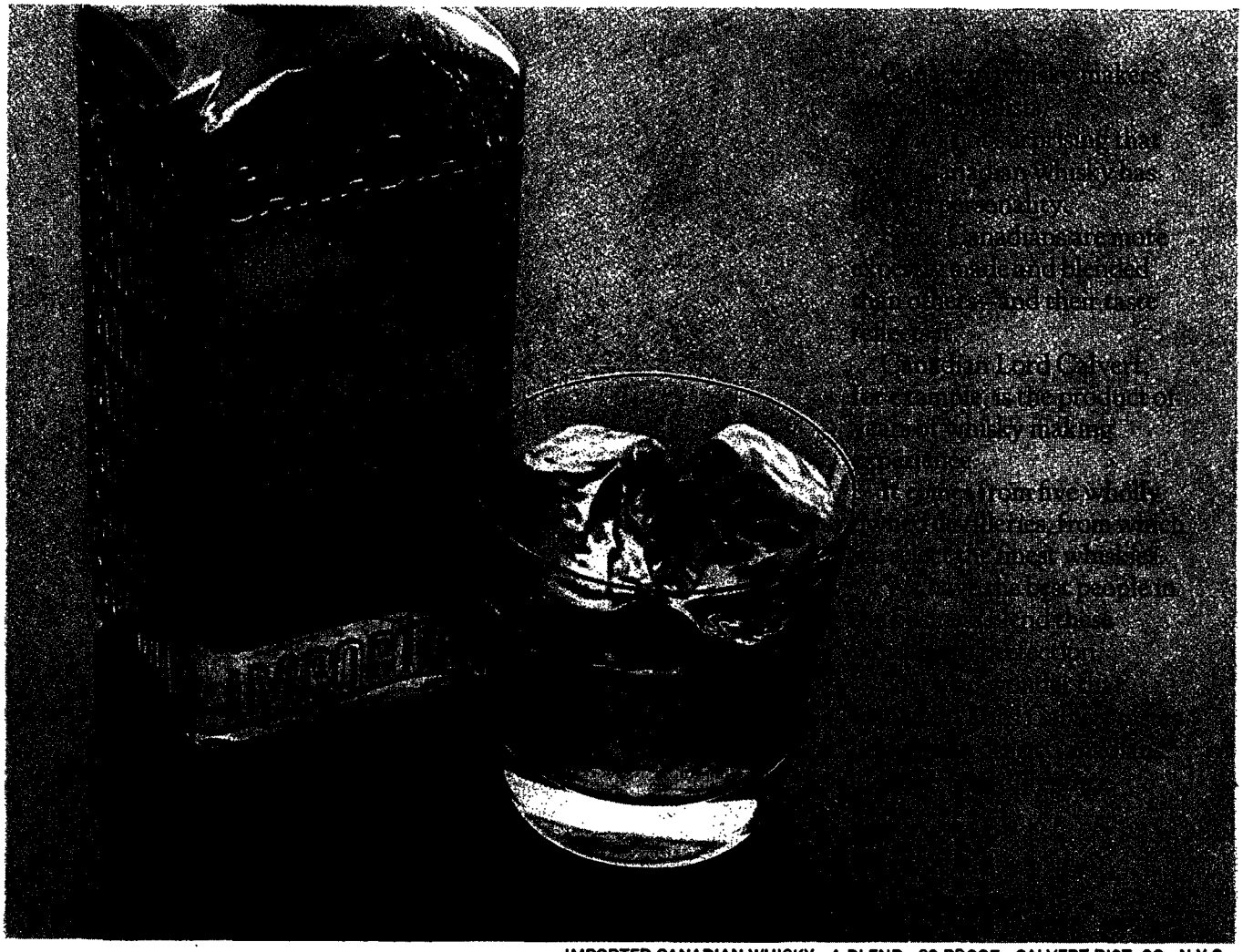

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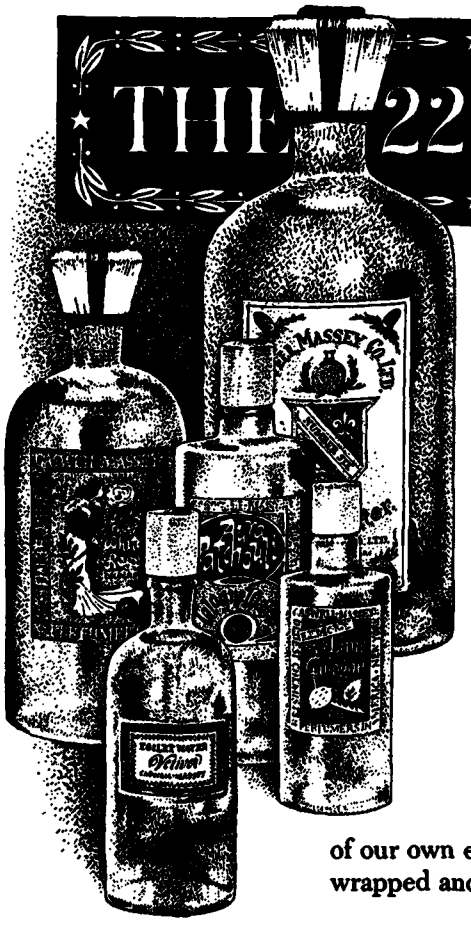

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make a case—and did—for the moral purpose of the young bomber but, surely, Mr. McCracken would not accept that kind of argument.

3) My critic says that in treating the third lie—"the American worker is a honky"—I do not deal with "the more plausible charge that the working classes tend to be racist." Here is just what I was arguing against, the creation of an abstraction called "the working classes" and then imputing to this vast number of people an ethos called "racism." It is *the* sin of the working classes, just as their other sin is a lust for money and possessions since they should be liberators not spenders. And why shouldn't the "working classes" be racist just like any other "class"? What about *their* moral purpose, even though it might not say much for *their* intelligence?

In America there is no one "class" more racist than any other. The whole "class" concept in American society, particularly, is so full of pitfalls that the concept itself borders on a kind of "racism." Stanley Ossowski in his *Class Structure in the Social Consciousness* has argued that our society is characterized by "nonegalitarian classlessness," something which Professor Earl Latham has defined as "a form of social inequality without social stratification, with much overlapping, without clearly differentiated social and economic functions, unlike the concept of class with which Marx worked." Why does fashionable advanced liberal opinion still talk about "the working classes"? To document the charge of "honkyism"?

4) Mr. McCracken's final point is that "Beichman's reliance on the idea of the lie is itself the source of the book's major weakness. For often he is exposing not willful misstatements of fact—which is what I take a lie to be—but rather inadequate or irrational interpretations, and sometimes these interpretations are not so much even irrational as based on values with which he disagrees."

Here I feel Mr. McCracken and I differ profoundly because of our different concepts about the word lie. A lie in culture—and that is what my book is really about—is not only, nor can it ever be, a mere misstatement of fact. A lie in culture is easy to accept and hard to refute because you're dealing with "meta-facts," and there are no empirical data. Take, for example,

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this phrase from *Book World* (January 16, 1972): "This nation is perilously close to collapse." What does this mean? That America is more perilously close to collapse than, say, Ghana, Bulgaria, Ceylon, China, Albania? What does the word "collapse" mean in this context? When the writer says "collapse" does he mean revolution, anarchy? Collapse into what? When a distinguished writer says that "the great virtue of economic depression is that it combines a very low degree of opportunity with a very high degree of motivation," it is not something refutable; it is a rather ghastly perversion of human values. When President Kingman Brewster of Yale said two years ago that a "black revolutionary" could not receive a fair trial in America, that was not only a misstatement of fact but also a lie in culture. When another university president says the American people have "embrace[d] Hitlerism" and a New York *Post* columnist says America and South Africa are about the same, are these just misstatements of fact or a disagreement over values? These are some examples from my book of not merely willful misstatements of fact but willful distortions of reality. I am sure a case could have been made out for Hitler's allegations of Jewish control of the German economy; the allegations were of course irrational and based on values with which we might disagree, but were they any less a lie because they contained a bit of "truth"? The devilish thing about lies in culture is that they are designed not to be refuted. . . . A man who says a country is "perilously close to collapse" is using a marvelous symbol whose content is nil because, as has been stated again and again (most recently by Irving Howe in his review of George Steiner's *In Bluebeard's Castle* in the February COMMENTARY), a theory that cannot be refuted cannot be demonstrated.

My last argument with Mr. McCracken, as I said at the outset, concerns the fact that I have not written another or a different book: "Having, moreover, charged the intellectuals of the radical Left with lying, Beichman seems more or less content to leave their motivations unexplored." I am not more content nor am I less content. I just did what I did, feeling a certain inadequacy in dealing with the motivations of thousands

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ARNOLD BEICHMAN
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, Massachusetts

SAMUEL MCCRACKEN writes:

Although I have long cherished the fantasy that some day an offended author will send these columns so devastating a rejoinder that the offending critic will fall upon his knees and beg forgiveness, in reality authorial response tends most often only to confirm critical stricture. Such I fear is the case on this occasion.

1) Part of the disagreement between me and Mr. Beichman depends upon the fact that I appear to take his chapter headings more seriously than he does. His first chapter, to judge from its heading, deals with the lie which says that the United States is a genocidal country. Now this lie, far from being an invention of Mr. Beichman, is very widely told indeed, generally in the form of a charge that the country has behaved genocidally toward a very large number of groups, most prominent among them Indians, blacks, and Vietnamese. I wished—and still wish—that Mr. Beichman had dealt with the charge as it is generally made, rather than with one of its special cases, one at that which has already been definitively refuted. Citing my judgment that the common allegation of American genocide against blacks and Vietnamese is a more substantial charge than the one about the Panthers, Mr. Beichman asks, "Among whom?" Among, of course, the sort of people who go about believing that America is a genocidal country, in short among those he is writing about and against. Among these people, the story of the plot against the Panthers is by no means the gravamen of the indictment for genocide. It would seem only reasonable to expect Mr. Beichman to deal with the gravamen rather than with its second cousin.

2) As to the Bomber Left, I still suspect that Mr. Beichman devotes more time and space than is strictly necessary to demonstrating left-wing tolerance of left-wing violence. Not, as he appears to say, that I don't think such tolerance depraved in the extreme, but rather because I think behavior which is no more than what one expects from political extremists of all sects can probably be dealt with rather less ponderously. To respond to his second objection, it seems to me that there is a profitable distinction between *A*, who tries to overthrow the government because he disagrees with it, and *B*, who does so because he thinks it illegitimate. Unless one denies the right of revolution at any time or in any place (as I presume Mr. Beichman does not), one needs some way to oppose those who would bring down the government in a welter of blood over an increase in subway fares without telling others that they must not try to get rid of Stalin. Naturally, to approve of efforts to get rid of Stalin is not to approve of all those who believe that they rebel against illegitimate authority, but it is to shift one's disagreements with some of those who would bring down the present government from the domain of democratic theory to that of fact.

3) Here, Mr. Beichman loses me altogether. He says, if I read him correctly, that he does not deal with the lie that the working classes tend to be racist because he does not believe it to be true. Now, I had thought that his *whole book* was about a series of statements which Mr. Beichman does not believe to be true, and that his reason for selecting these in particular from all the vast realm of the false was that they are being widely retailed by certain sorts of people who ought to know better. If one were to exempt from discussion all those lies which one believes to be false, it would seem that one would have to seek some subject matter quite other than lies.

4) Mr. Beichman may misquote Kingman Brewster less violently than some others have, but misquote him he still does. Brewster did not declare that a black revolutionary could not get a fair trial in America, but expressed his skepticism as to whether he could. Hindsight may tell us that Brewster's skepticism was ill-taken—as most certainly it was if by "fair trial" he meant acquittal—but there remains a considerable difference between a declaration that such will not at some time in the future be the case and expression of uncertainty as to whether it will be. Mr. Beichman's targets are constantly guilty of blurring just such distinctions, and it behooves him to avoid what he deplores in others.

Apparently we do disagree as to what makes a lie: it seems to me that there is again a crucial distinction between saying that which one believes or knows to be false, and believing and saying that which others believe or know to be false. That American academics can believe the sort of balderdash they have been saying is as alarming to me as the idea that they may say it though not believe it; but the two phenomena are distinct in nature, and require distinctive analysis and remedy.

5) I presume that any unfavorable criticism, however mild, can be seen as a demand for a different book, and thus disposed of as not quite cricket. The hard fact is that any critic's wish that a book had been better is of course a wish that it had been different: the two desires are quite inseparable.

I am finally surprised that Mr. Beichman should feel inadequate to the task that I would set him: he has, in the book he has written, judged that thousands and thousands of individual Americans do not believe within themselves what they say they do; to do what I would have him do, to consider further why they should so behave, may require different powers, but hardly ones of a much greater magnitude.

Encyclopaedia Judaica

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Chaim Raphael ["Encyclopaedia Judaica," August] must have a penchant for discarding known facts for the sake of his speculations. Thus, for him, by the end of the 19th century "there was virtually nothing except for Josephus that offered Jews any systematic account of their past after Bible times." Heinrich Graetz's voluminous (German) *History of the Jews* (not the shortened English translation), of which numerous editions appeared and which began in midcentury with the volume dealing with the post-biblical period, does not exist for Mr. Raphael. Nor do Abraham Geiger, Leopold Zunz, and the others who built up the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* during the 19th century.

The same must be said of his "story" about the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Mr. Raphael goes back seventy years to find sources, parallels, and inspiration in the *Jewish Encyclopaedia* of 1901-6 although it is obvious that the English *Encyclopaedia Judaica* took not only

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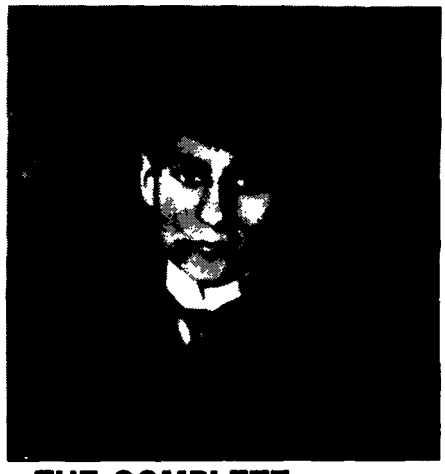
Kafka



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the name of the "incompleted German *Encyclopaedia Judaica*" but also much of its materials, and was originally organized to supplement it. One should therefore have a look at the history of the English *Encyclopaedia Judaica.*

Encyclopaedia Judaica (and a parallel Hebrew *Eshkol* Encyclopaedia) were founded in the 1920's in Berlin by the late Dr. Jacob Klatzkin and Dr. Nahum Goldmann (with funds provided by German-Jewish communities and wealthy individuals). By 1933 when the Nazis came to power nine volumes (out of fifteen) of the German *Encyclopaedia Judaica* and two of the Hebrew edition were published. With the changed situation the impossibility of continuing the work in Germany became clear (although the tenth volume was still issued in 1934). A small office and the materials were transferred to Switzerland where Dr. Klatzkin was then living. There a very small skeleton staff carried on the preparation of further volumes in German and Hebrew until the fall of 1934 when financial problems called the project to a halt.

In the postwar years after Dr. Goldmann had established himself in the U.S., he wanted to have the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* completed, this time in English with himself serving in an honorary capacity (Dr. Klatzkin had died in the meantime). At the beginning of the 1960's some funds became available for this purpose (from German sources) and editorial offices were set up in Philadelphia with a small ("liaison") office in Israel and all the materials of the German *Encyclopaedia Judaica,* including those for the eleventh volume (letter "M," etc.), were turned over to the editors. After four or five years' work in the preparation and editing of articles for the first volumes, financial and personnel problems led to the closing of the office in the U.S. All the materials, including thousands of items and edited articles, were transferred to Israel where initially a government-sponsored organization took over the editorial work (Dr. Nahum Goldmann had succeeded in obtaining a considerable AID loan from the U.S. and another loan from the Israeli government). In the later stages a private corporation (Keter Publishing House in Jerusalem) took over responsibility for the *Encyclopaedia Judaica.*

Thus the *Encyclopaedia Judaica cannot* be said to have "originated in Israel" because it really goes back to the interwar Klatzkin-Goldmann *Encyclopaedia Judaica* and the subsequent editorial work in the U.S. from which the new *Encyclopaedia Judaica* took over thousands of items and many edited articles. The final changes made by the editors in Jerusalem—to judge on the basis of a few dozen items which came into this writer's hands—hardly constitute sufficient "improvement" to make of it "an entirely new enterprise." And, of course, in the light of the historical facts, Mr. Raphael's statement "that there was the will, among those concerned, to meet the needs of world Jewry at this time with a work of this kind" remains at best a metaphor without any substance.

BERNARD D. WEINRYB
Russian Research Center
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

CHAIM RAPHAEL writes:

It seems to me self-evident that to produce a full-scale Jewish encyclopedia in 1972, reflecting, among many other things, the whole Nazi horror and the existence for nearly twenty-five years of the State of Israel, completely transcends in concept and execution the range of the earlier *Encyclopaedia Judaica,* which began to be produced in German in the 1920's, and had to be dropped in the early 1930's with only ten volumes completed, up to the letter "L." The new encyclopedia from Israel pays full tribute in its introduction to the scholarship standards of this uncompleted work, which it received permission to draw on. It may well be that some entries of historical character could be utilized without many changes, as Bernard D. Weinryb avers. But this would hardly bear significantly on the originality of the new encyclopedia as a whole. Everything, old and new, had to be reassessed, not only because of the new Jewish experience, but also in the light of the remarkable developments in Jewish scholarship in our own day. Indeed, the fact that this field of study has been intensified to an extraordinary degree in Israel itself in the last few decades bore heavily on the decision to transfer the preparation of the encyclopedia to Israel, a move that was essential as well as appropriate. Dr. Nahum Gold-

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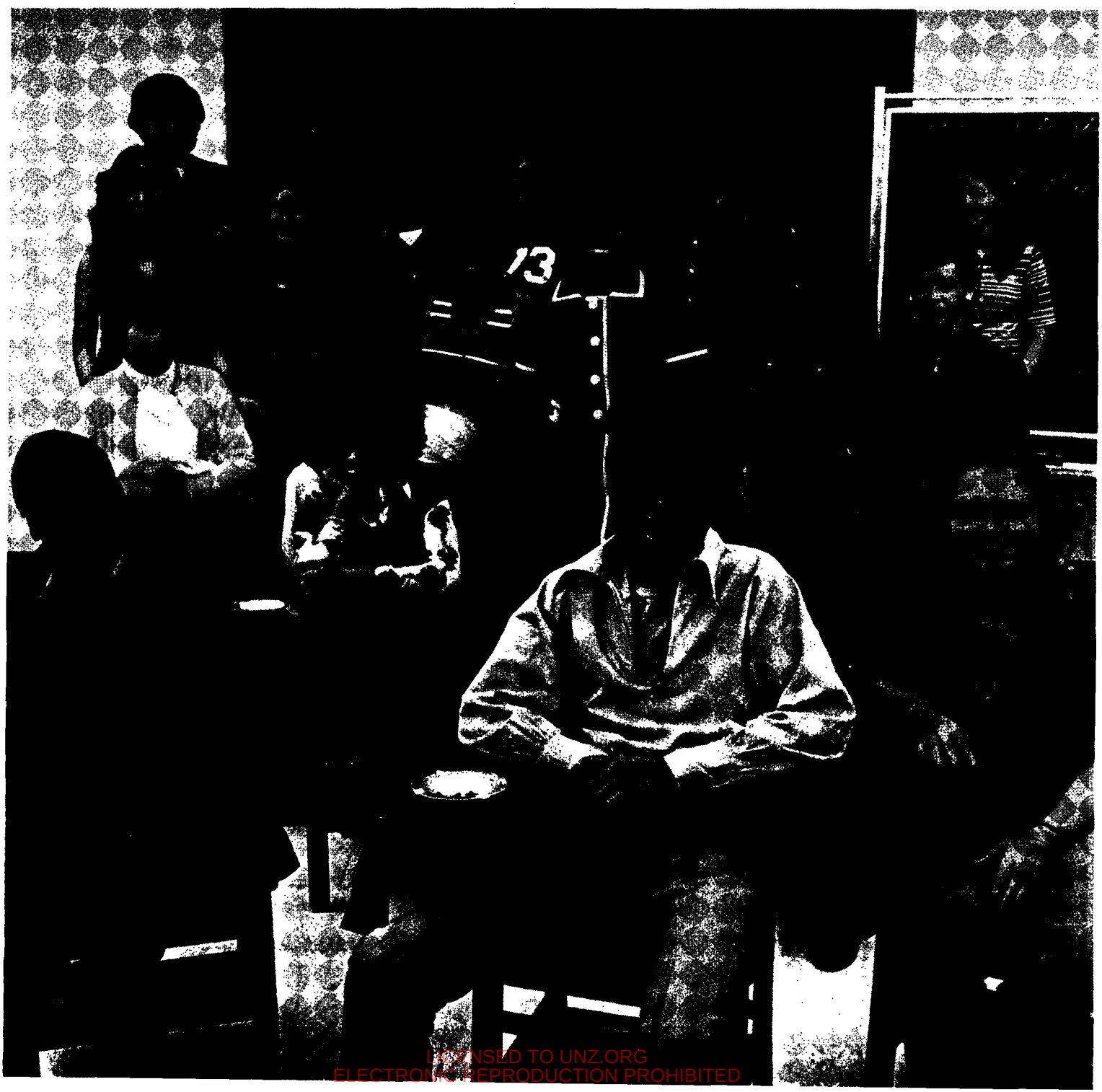

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mann's role, from the early efforts in Germany until now, has clearly been of the greatest importance. It in no sense belittles the work of pioneers in the field to pay tribute, as I did, to the supreme effort which must have been necessary to distill all the existing material—whatever its source—and bring it to publication in a style (including wonderful illustrations) that would have been impossible years ago.

I believe that it is correct, also, to draw a parallel, in historical terms, with the publication of the first great *Jewish Encyclopaedia* seventy years ago. The achievement of that work was to bring to world Jewry a systematic distillation of a great deal of entirely new material that had been produced in the preceding decades, but mostly (as Mr. Weinryb admits) in German. Graetz had started publishing his *Geschichte* in the 1850's, but the translation into Yiddish, Hebrew, English, and other languages had been carried through only toward the end of the 19th century. The old *JE* gave the ordinary Jews of the world (as distinct from scholars) the first chance to see their history and background in context. The new *Encyclopaedia Judaica* does the same, after a period in which almost everything connected with Jewish existence has been subjected to revolutionary change.

Eugenics

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I agree with Norman Podhoretz's assertion ["Beyond ZPG," May] that "we may be dealing here not merely with an effort to control the size of the population but with an effort to control its character; not merely with an effort to control the quality of life but with an effort to control the quality of the human 'stock' itself." But Mr. Podhoretz's modern history goes astray, especially where American eugenic history is concerned. "The last time such an effort was made, of course, was by the Nazis," he writes, "and so horrible were the consequences that many people assumed it would never be tried again. . . ."

What he does not consider is the history of eugenics and the extreme hereditarian attitudes in this country which long predated Hitler and the Nuremberg laws of Nazi Germany. The notion of ridding America of its "defective" stock, or in the language of the

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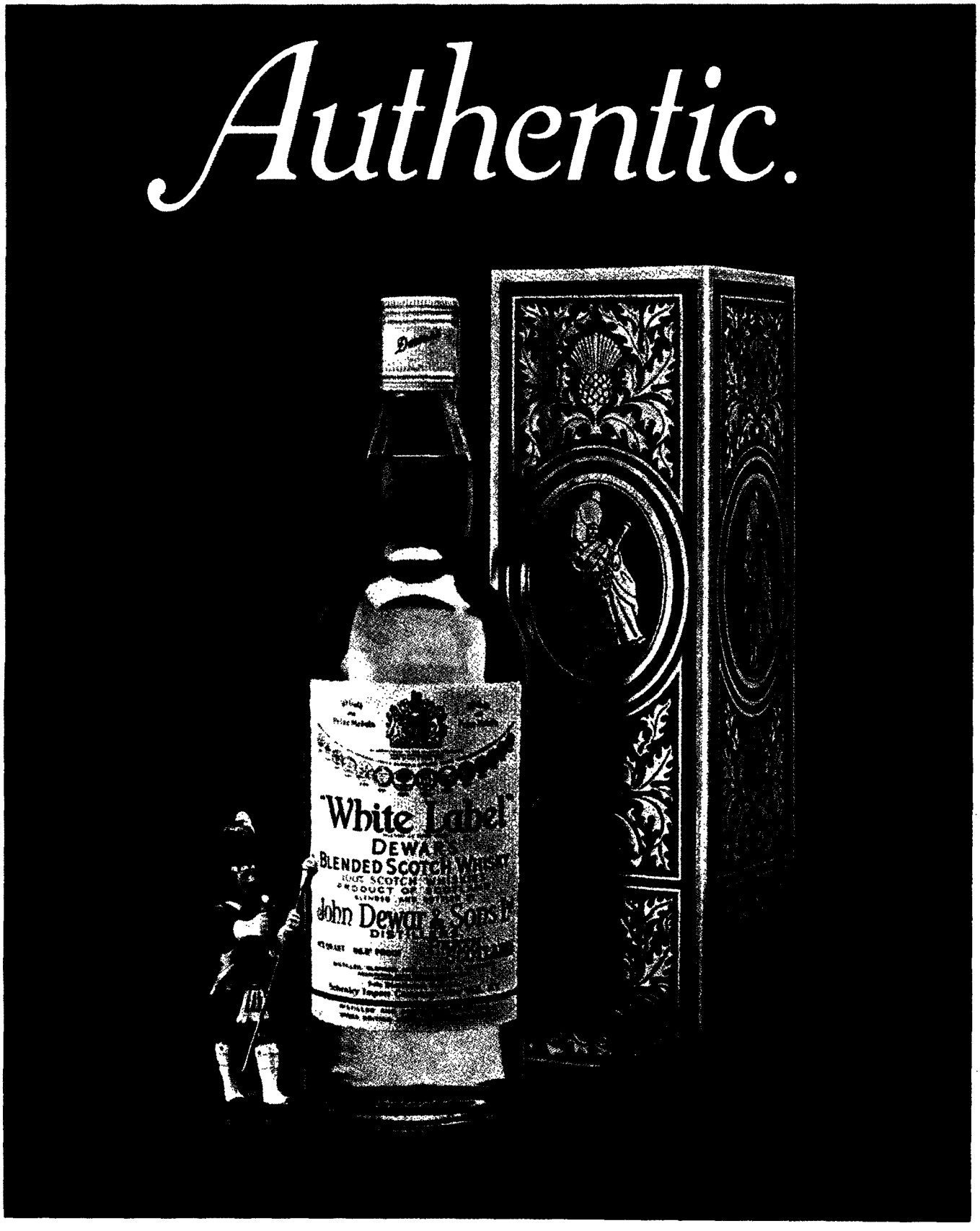

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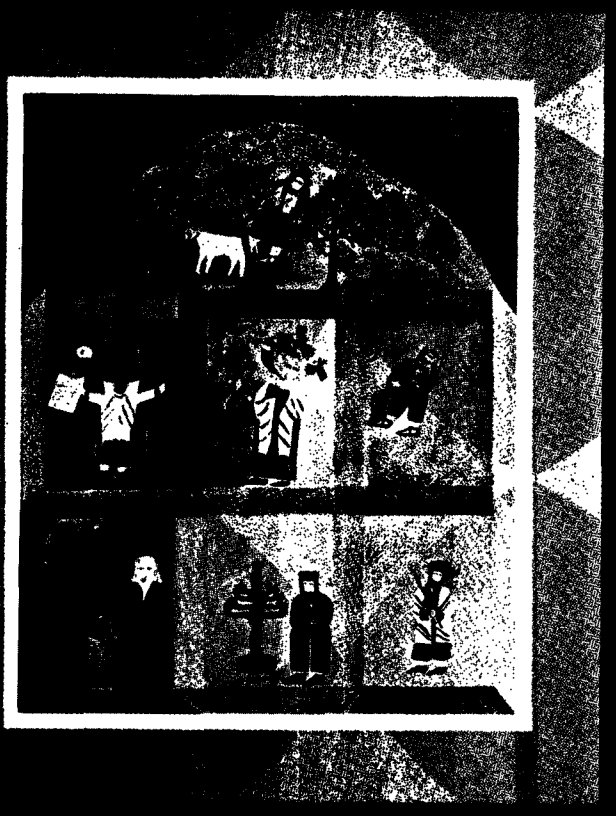

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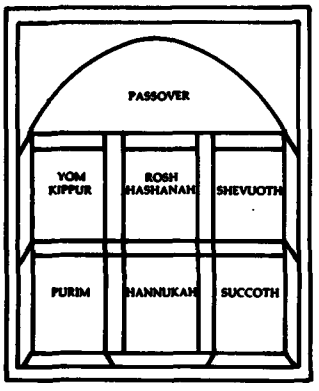

THE HOLIDAYS is typical of Harry Lieberman's joyous treatment of religious themes as he charmingly crowds a lifetime into a single picture, vibrant with color. Naive yet sophisticated, the overall effect can be likened to a Hasidic combination of biblical literalness and inspired symbolism. A faint nostalgia for the teachings of childhood and its lost innocence permeates the entire group despite its paradoxical appearance of stained glass panels in a wood frame.

Harry Lieberman's own life is as fascinating as his paintings, which win high critical praise wherever they are shown. Although he started his painting career late (at the age of 78) and as a primitive, there is nothing amateurish about his work. In fact, the richness of the color and detail in his interpretations of Biblical themes imbue them with great vitality and warmth.

Born in a typical *shtetl*, Gnieveshev, pop. 500, near Warsaw, nephew of the village Rabbi, Harry Lieberman followed the Hasidic Sect of Mystic Ecstasy founded by the Baal-Shem-Tov. He came to this country in 1906 and worked at first as a clothing cutter on the lower East Side of New York. The confectionary business beckoned next, and the one he and his wife started grew and prospered until he retired to Great Neck, New York, in 1950. There his primary interest was chess but, when his chess partner fell ill—Harry Lieberman turned to painting.

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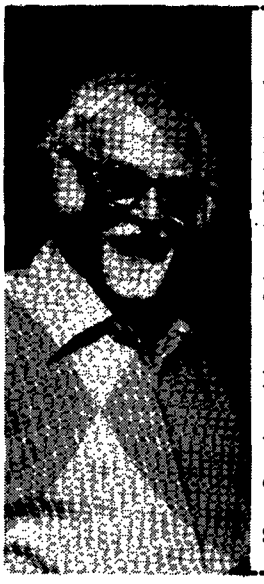

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earlier extreme hereditarians, "purifying" it of its "cacogenic" or socially inadequate categories, led the eugenics section of the American Breeders' Association to state in 1914: "Society must look upon germ-plasm as belonging to society and not merely to the individual who carries it" (Report on the Best Practical Means of Cutting Off the Defective Germ-Plasm of the American Population). A "model" state eugenic-sterilization law was added to this report which included, among others, such categories as the feeble-minded, insane, epileptic, criminal, inebriate, diseased, blind, deaf, deformed, and dependent (including "orphans, ne'er-do-wells, the homeless, tramps, and paupers"). As a result of this activity a rash of compulsory-sterilization, marriage, and restrictive-immigration laws were passed during the early decades of this century in many states. Most states applied these laws only to the mentally retarded, the mentally ill, and the epileptic if they were covered by the statute. J. H. Landman, in his 1932 study, *Human Sterilization: The History of the Sexual Sterilization Movement,* reported 34 distinct classes of sterilizable persons in the 24 states with compulsory sterilization laws at that time (26 states still have sterilization laws of various kinds, most of them compulsory).

The extreme hereditarians in America never reached the terrifying excesses of the Nazis in large part because our eugenic laws were unable to go beyond eugenic sterilization and marriage (negative eugenic) expectations, and because of what the late Havelock Ellis predicted would happen, namely, that our legalistic tradition would kill or hamstring the operation of these laws. . . . In some cases this was true, but the United States Supreme Court, in *Buck* v. *Bell* (1927) upheld the constitutionality of compulsory state eugenic-sterilization laws. In the words of Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes: ". . . The principle that sustains compulsory vaccination is broad enough to cover cutting the Fallopian tubes. . . . Three generations of imbeciles are enough."

From 1907, when the first state-sterilization law was passed in Indiana, to the mid-1960's, when cumulative state statistics were no longer compiled, upward of 65,000 persons were sterilized. And a large percentage of these compulsory sterilizations were not on the mentally retarded, but on the mentally ill. . . . Thus, the notion of *fitness for parenthood* . . . is very much a part of the American tradition and has been practiced in many of our states since 1907 (and extra-legally as far back as the 1880's).

We are now observing a return to many of the arguments of the earlier extreme hereditarians. Moreover, the new hereditarians are armed, as Mr. Podhoretz notes, with better scientific knowledge of human genetics and with unprecedented new technologies for what some call biogenetic engineering. Mr. Podhoretz's fears are far from unfounded; but many scientists are as alarmed as he is at the *potential* consequences of applying these scientific technologies without an awareness of their consequences for human freedom, dignity, and individual worth.

Dr. Leon Kass, executive secretary of the National Academy of Sciences, in an article, "Making Babies—The New Biology and the 'Old' Morality" (*Public Interest,* Winter 1972), writes: "Let us simply look at what we have done in our conquest of non-human nature. We shall find there no grounds for optimism as we now consider offers to turn our technology loose on human nature. In the absence of standards to guide and restrain the use of this awesome power, we can only dehumanize man as we have despoiled our planet. The knowledge of these standards requires a wisdom we do not possess, and what is worse, we do not even seek."

Kass, geneticist Theodosius Dobzhansky, microbiologist René Dubos, and many other voices from various scientific fields have reminded us that we are still human, and that perhaps it is in man's present and potential ability through biological and genetic engineering to "transcend" his human nature that he most vividly threatens himself.

JULIUS PAUL
State University of New York
at Fredonia
Fredonia, New York

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Affirmative Action & Quotas

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In all likelihood, there would be little disagreement with the view that human relations constitutes the crucial challenge of our time. But there is insufficient awareness of the high sensitivity that surrounds discussion of any facet of this complex and delicate area of our social organization. A difference of emphasis in formulation or a modicum of imprecision in language can create grave misunderstanding resulting in hostility, suspicion, and embarrassment. The term "quota" as recently employed by both proponents and opponents [Earl Raab, "Quotas by Any Other Name," January; Paul Seabury, "HEW & the Universities," February; Letters from Readers, May, June, July; and Elliott Abrams, "The Quota Commission," October] has been responsible for just these undesirable consequences.

This designation, naturally, calls forth memories of harsh realities of the past—the restrictions on admission to universities based on religious affiliation that continued into the 30's; the rejection for the same reason by medical schools of applicants, no matter how well-qualified, that persisted until the early 40's, and, above all, the restriction of immigration to the United States on the ground of ethnic origin which culminated in the unjust and cruel quota-immigration law of 1924.

But the common designation of "quota" is not related to these past tragic experiences. Advancement is the objective in the current instance, not restriction. As a matter of fact, those who are now opposed to what is loosely termed "quotas" for the most part support the fundamental policies which, if implemented, would in the long run render unnecessary the utilization of measures which might be termed "quota."

I list the principles in the order of the magnitude of adherence which many right-thinking and civic-conscious American citizens, especially those directly engaged in human-relations programs, support in one form or another:

1) No person's life chances should be affected by his race, his religion, his national origin, or his class status.

2) Since for more than three hundred years, blacks (as well as other non-white groups) have been disadvantaged as a group through deprivation, discrimination, neglect, and cruelty, it is now incumbent upon all of us, both by law and human-heartedness, to do everything in our power to advance the condition of the members of these depressed groups and to expedite their entry into the mainstream of American society.

3) To achieve this result it is not sufficient to avoid utilizing discriminatory procedures on *entry* into employment, educational institutions, the civil service, and the academic fraternity, but to engage in *affirmative action* to mitigate the injury inflicted by these destructive practices.

It is in the implementation of "affirmative action" that we squarely face our difficulties. For here we enter the realm of practice. It was Bismarck who is credited with the observation: "If someone tells me that he agrees with me in principle, I feel pretty certain that he has no intention of agreeing with me in practice."

The following, in my view, are essential to the fulfillment of the goal of affirmative action:

A *search* for desirable applicants among the blacks and other disadvantaged groups should be conducted. Not so long ago Jewish organizations were told by banks and utilities that the reluctance of Jews to apply for positions in these corporations explained the meager representation of Jews in their executive suites. Since then, some of these companies have shown that it is possible to conduct a successful "search" for applicants from this group.

Members from the disadvantaged groups should be trained in the required skills in a specific industry; there are still government funds available to industrial establishments for this purpose.

Compensatory services in education should be maintained for disadvantaged individuals through concentrated and innovative educational programs, thus preparing them for entry into higher educational pursuits—not on a *preferential* basis of color, race, or ethnic identity; not to lower admission requirements, but to make available the special services that would prepare them to function on an equal footing with their colleagues. Programs such as these would tend to compensate for past deprivations and discrimination.

We should make certain that, in job recruitment, the tests employed to determine qualifications for hiring purposes do not include *built-in* discriminatory elements that are, in fact, of little or no value in predicting quality of performance. For instance, the best test for a teacher with the culturally disadvantaged may actually be sample performance on the job, not simply the possession of a certificate.

Lastly—and this I believe to be the crux of this involved matter—we must utilize the "pattern" approach and not just the *nature of the practice* as a criterion for ascertaining the presence or absence of discriminatory practices. We should not be satisfied merely with examining the procedures employed in hiring, but we should look to see how many blacks there are in the factory or among the university faculty. Do we have a situation where practically all workers are black and none is in a supervisory post? Are 90 per cent of the teachers in a school black, but very few or none in administrative or supervisory posts? If these conditions prevail, then we should resort to the *search* and to the *training* of prospective black personnel to correct this unsatisfactory existing "pattern."

It may take time to do this, but it is our obligation to demonstrate our good faith in our goals and in the guidelines that we set for ourselves. And we should welcome the objective review of our "pattern" of performance and the efforts we put forth to achieve our stated goals by an outside agency, such as the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. We must not be rushed by extremists; responsible minority leadership will support our position if we demonstrate beyond the shadow of a doubt genuine good faith in carrying out our commitments.

This "pattern-goal-guideline" approach does not constitute a "quota" system. It is *compensatory* action, not *preferential* treatment. It will make possible in the long run the retention of a fundamental attribute of democracy—individual merit—and concomitantly advance the condition of the depressed minority group.

The stress placed, by both opponents and supporters, on the so-called "quota" approach confuses the basic issue. We should emphasize what we are genuinely *for* and not what we are *against*, thus avoiding the mistaken impression

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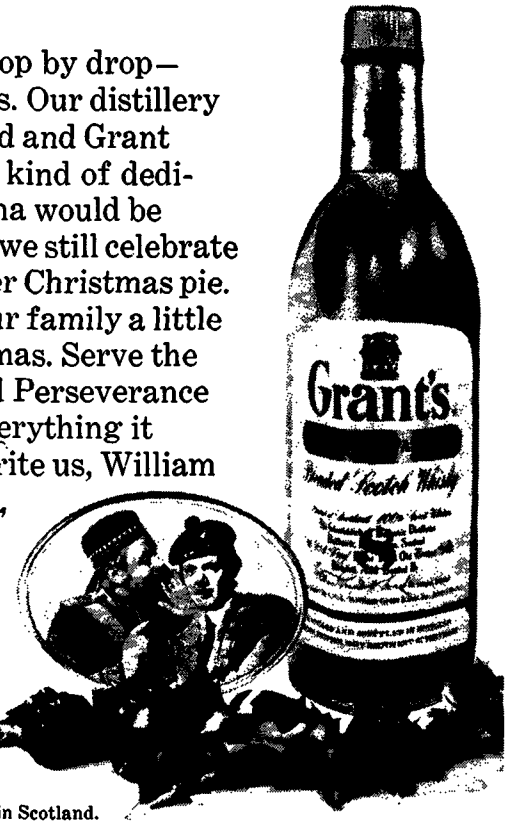

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that we are solely concerned with our own particular bailiwick and only secondarily with the moral and ethical fiber of society as a whole.

There will of course be certain inevitable displacements due to increased competition from newly qualified minority-group members. But this has always occurred in the history of the United States during the process of immigrant adjustment and the upward climb of our various ethnic groups. Teaching jobs may become less plentiful for certain minorities as a result of this competition, but jobs in desirable posts of the industrial corporation may become more readily available. The latter is, as a matter of fact, taking place. The temporary displacement will eventually become a replacement.

JOHN SLAWSON
Columbia University and
Hunter College School of
Social Work
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In connection with your continuing discussion of affirmative action and quotas, I thought you might be interested in the following correspondence.

JACK HIRSHLEIFER
University of California,
Los Angeles
Los Angeles, California

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
AT BUFFALO

Department of Economics
June 19, 1972

Dear Professor ——— :

It is highly probable that all universities are being subjected to pressures (from HEW and elsewhere) to pay more attention to the hiring of faculty members from minority groups (*viz.* blacks, Puerto Ricans, and women). In effect, this seems to have become a national policy.

Accordingly, the earlier policy of *not* identifying on *curricula vitae* race and sex, at least, would appear to have become outdated. At any rate, continuation of this earlier policy has the effect of making more difficult implementation of the new one; for we are put in the ofttimes embarrassing position of inquiring about the race of Mr. or Ms. X, or bluntly, whether Department Y has any good blacks (or women, etc.) available.

As an alternative to such questions, and in recognition of the new policy, I propose that henceforth all *curricula vitae* of new Ph.D.'s coming onto the market contain identifications of race and sex. . . .

Sincerely,
[signed] D. HAMBERG*
Chairman

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

Department of Economics
July 12, 1972

Dear Professor Hamberg:

As I have been Placement Officer of the UCLA Economics Department for the past academic year, my department chairman has passed on to me your letter of June 19, 1972. You will recall that you proposed there that all job candidates be labeled as to race and sex, evidently for the convenience of employers engaging in race and sex discrimination. . . .

You are evidently *de facto* correct that preferential hiring has become "national policy" (as have race and sex quotas in the form of targets or goals). A certain lag in following this policy is perhaps excusable; it is a bit confusing that our obsolete non-discrimination legislation does not seem to have been repealed or invalidated. Regardless of merely *pro forma* law, however, the actual practices now demanded of us are clear enough. I do not see, therefore, why you or anyone should feel "embarrassed" about carrying out the new policy. Still, I admit that there would be a saving of time and convenience if we were to adopt race and sex labeling.

But I am afraid that your letter adopts a rather cavalier attitude toward something which, upon due reflection, you will realize merits more careful attention. While the question does not seem to arise with respect to sex, there is a very serious problem about race labeling. If our department happened to mis-label a candidate racially, we might well be leaving ourselves open to a lawsuit. For as you know, the lifetime earnings differential of preferential access to desirable employment may amount to no mean sum. On the other hand, allowing the candidate to label himself—in effect, to award himself the racial qualifications necessary for employment—would be an invitation to abuse. (Indeed, we have already experienced here a mini-scandal: a Jew of Sephardic origin attempted to pass himself off as a genuine member of a Latin minority!)

I do not mean to be entirely unconstructive. If there were objective or legally established definitions of race, together with a legal requirement of full disclosure of racial origins, we would be in the clear. I understand that a number of steps in this direction were achieved by the "Nuremberg laws" of Nazi Germany. And in the Soviet Union, I am told, all individuals carry their racial identifications on their internal passports. Similarly for blacks in South Africa. So there are precedents. I would suggest that the American Economic Association call upon the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW), and other bureaucratic agencies now engaged in promoting racial discrimination, for assistance. We should ask them to establish legal "guidelines" as to: (1) Which races are to be preferred, and which discriminated against; (2) what criteria (how many grandparents?) determine racial qualifications for employment; (3) what administrative procedures must be set up for appeals against arbitrary classification.

With guidelines like these, you and other department chairmen would suffer neither embarrassment nor inconvenience in employing some individuals, and refusing to hire others, on the grounds of their race and sex. And you will have the peace of mind of knowing that the authenticity of racial labelings have in effect been guaranteed by an agency of the federal government.

JACK HIRSHLEIFER
Professor

* Professor Hamberg has written us as follows: "Nothing in my letter is to be construed as implying support or approval of the affirmative-action programs currently being pushed by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Quite the contrary, I endorse the reservations raised by Jack Hirshleifer."—ED.

On Merit

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "McGovern, Nixon & the Jews" [September], Milton Himmelfarb, arguing that Jews should support Nixon, uses my essay, "Open Admissions: Toward Meritocracy or Equality?" (*Change*, May 1972), as a "concrete illustration of what is at stake" in the 1972 election. He alleges that I am an advocate of quotas, though he fails to document this asser-

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tion. Instead, he begins with an *ad hominem* attack: "No doubt [Karabel] thinks of himself as nonconformist and anti-establishment, but in matters of this sort, can anything be more establishmentarian than an article by someone on the staff of his organization?" The organization he refers to is the American Council on Education's Office of Research, where the article was written, but Mr. Himmelfarb does not bother to explain how my organizational affiliation affects the substance of my arguments.

In my article, I maintain that merit criteria such as test scores and grades, which were once progressive in that they provided channels of mobility for excluded immigrant groups, now serve mainly to transmit and justify privilege. Mr. Himmelfarb dismisses this statement, complaining that my reasons for making it are "not explained very clearly." Though I thought my reasons were clear, I will elaborate upon them here since the point is an important one. When social status and academic achievement were sharply discrepant, as was the case with certain immigrant groups (particularly Jews and Orientals), the emphasis on uniform academic standards served to increase equality of opportunity. At that time, the struggle for equality of opportunity was more closely linked to the larger struggle for equality. Jews, who suffered acutely under a system of ascription (reliance upon birth rather than merit), were prominent in this struggle; at the same time, many of them recognized that a grossly unequal distribution of rewards, however "neutral" the process of allocation, was itself unjust. Now, however, as Mr. Himmelfarb's article itself demonstrates, equal opportunity and equality are seen by some as inimical rather than complementary. In the present social context, this seemingly disinterested commitment to "merit" enables the privileged to justify their own status and to transmit that status to their children.

The "second thing of interest" in my article, according to Mr. Himmelfarb, is the assertion that "as long as some colleges are academically more selective than others, there will be unjust inequality." This interpretation again grossly distorts my position. I argued that the university virtually determines entry into the middle- and upper-level positions in the occupational hierarchy and thus is a key distributor of privilege. Since the way in which a society distributes its rewards is a profoundly political matter, the admissions process has an inherent political component in addition to its more overt academic component. My emphasis was on the consequences of selectivity in a society which uses its system of higher education as an agent of social selection. In a previous article (*Educational Record*, Winter 1972), I made this point as follows: "Clearly, if the modern university conferred no benefits on anyone and consisted solely of people so interested in the discovery and transmission of knowledge that they were willing to take a vow of poverty, there would be little clamor for universal access."

The problem, as I suggested in the *Change* article, is that the tracking system implicit in higher education, which uses academic selectivity as its primary sorting device, increasingly reflects both class origin and occupational destination. A growing body of evidence shows that students who attend selective schools, most of whom come from affluent backgrounds, receive certain "fringe benefits" independent of their academic ability or their achievement in college. The "ivory tower" that Mr. Himmelfarb defends is, in reality, one of the primary channeling devices in modern America. It is peculiar indeed that a man supposedly concerned with the purity of the university does not recognize that this sorting function may itself interfere with genuine education.

The main point of my article was that the present system of higher education is structured less to serve educational or broad societal needs than to serve the demand of a quasi-meritocratic class structure. In place of the current policy of picking winners (students who have already demonstrated superior cognitive achievement), I proposed emphasizing the student's educational growth in college, regardless of his level of performance at entry. A recent study by Edward Denison of the Brookings Institution reports that we spend $5,811 of public funds for the higher education of the white high-school graduate who made at least an A— average but only $666 for the high-school graduate with an aver-

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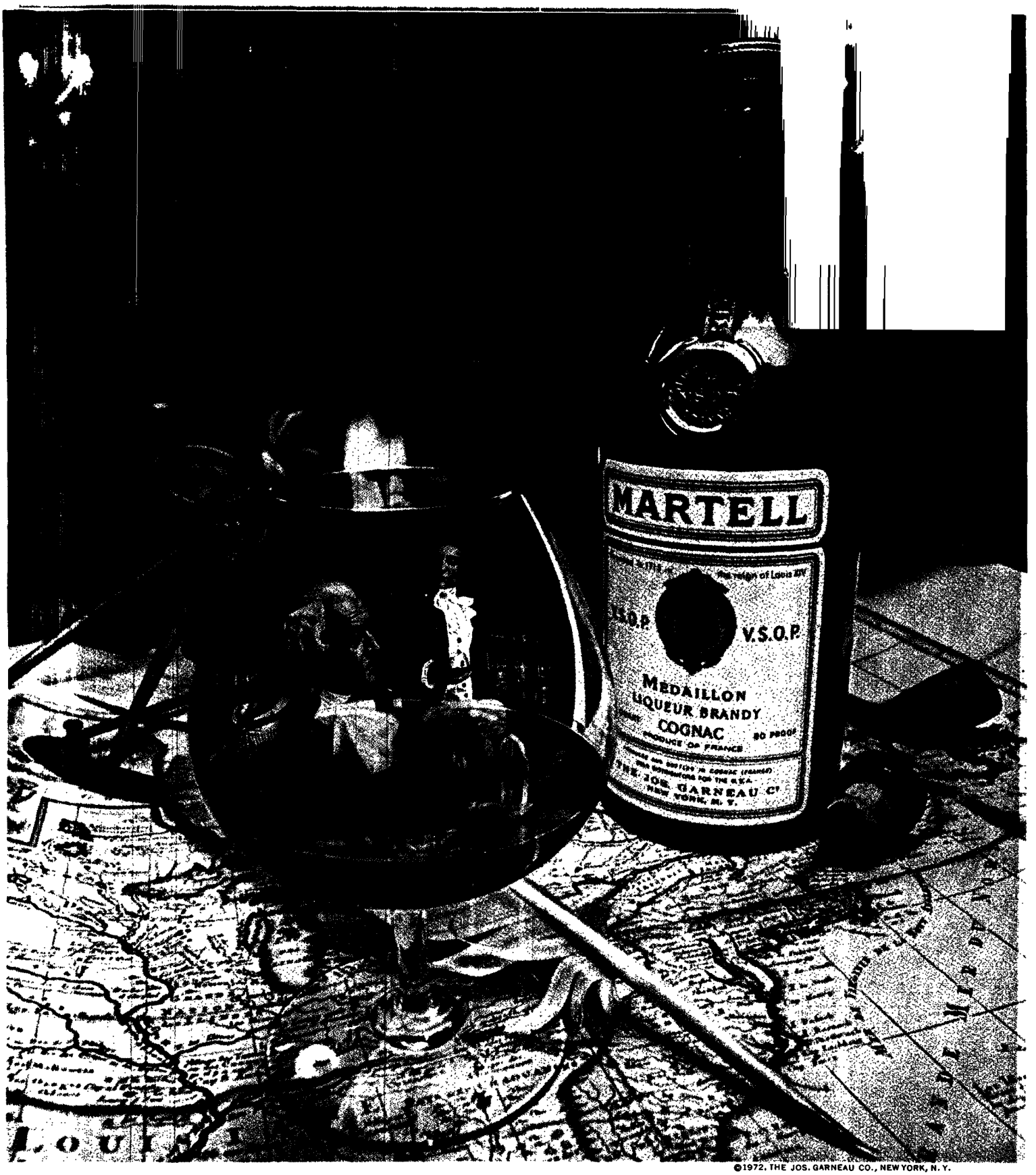

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age below C—. As Denison himself states: "Presumably we must take differences in natural ability as given, but no law of nature requires us to provide the most and best education to those already blessed with the greatest natural ability, and thus to accentuate their initial advantage." That we do this reflects not the conscious application of an educational philosophy but rather the extent to which matters of social class have intruded into the educational process. The underlying question posed by my article was whether we want our system of higher education to serve a highly competitive and inegalitarian economic system or to help us construct a more cooperative and egalitarian society. Mr. Himmelfarb does not discuss these matters though they are much more central to the article than the issues he raises.

Following his reference to "Podunk A. and M.," Mr. Himmelfarb accuses me of being against "distinction" and against the university as a "place where Mycenaean studies can be cultivated." His tone is such as to present me as an enemy of culture while he himself is its guardian. A vigorous assault on a non-position, his words are designed to discredit my arguments by associating them with a viewpoint I do not endorse.

Mr. Himmelfarb's own conception of culture is disturbingly elitist. Apparently, "culture" is something more suitable for the few students at the "University of Chicago" than for their counterparts at "Podunk A. and M." He is more concerned with preserving than extending culture and does not consider that an open and democratic system of higher education might broaden and enrich the cultural level of all members of society. His conception of culture, then, is primarily defensive, a viewpoint which R. H. Tawney criticizes in his book *Equality*. Observing that "culture is not an assortment of aesthetic sugarplums for fastidious palates," he argues that:

> It is necessary, not only to preserve intact existing standards of excellence, and to diffuse their influence, but to broaden and enrich them by contact with an ever-widening range of emotional experiences and intellectual interests. The association of culture with a limited class . . . may achieve the first, but it cannot, by itself, achieve the second. It may refine, or appear to refine, some sections of a community, but it coarsens others, and smites, in the end, with a plight of sterility even refinement itself.

A university system dedicated to Tawney's enlightened view of culture might well, in the end, do far more to preserve culture and to extend it than would Himmelfarb's narrower conception.

JEROME KARABEL
Vineland, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

One statement by Milton Himmelfarb, nearly echoed by Nathan Glazer, bothered me above all else in the articles on "McGovern, Nixon & the Jews." It is the assertion that if—God forbid—Israel should cease to exist, American Jews effectively would cease to exist. Why? Prior to the establishment of Israel American Jews prospered, both as Americans and as Jews. What evidence is there to make us believe that conditions have changed so drastically as to call into question the potential viability of American Jewry without Israel?

It may be argued that in many respects American Jewry has abdicated leadership, even of its own affairs, to Israel. But that is only because Israel is there, and has demonstrated a desire to assume leadership of Jews throughout the world, and we have not chosen to resist. It does not mean that we do not have leadership capability within us, now dormant, which would reassert itself should the need arise. Moreover, the morale and cohesiveness of American Jews has, if anything, increased, which is no evidence that such cohesiveness, or the effect on us of the inspiriting example of Israel among the nations, would diminish should Israel—God forbid—cease to exist.

Dr. Jacob Neusner put it even more strongly in *Judaism* (Summer 1970): "The chances for survival of the Jewish people have surely been enhanced by the dispersion of the Jews among differing political systems. Until World War II Jews had stood on both sides of every international contest from most remote antiquity. Now, we enter an age in which the fate of Jewry and destiny of Judaism are supposed to depend on the fortunes of one state and one community alone. That, to be sure, is not a fact, for even now the great Jewish communities in the USSR, Western Europe, Latin America, and North America, as well as smaller ones elsewhere, continue to conform to the historical pattern."

Increasingly in recent months I have encountered the proposition offered by Mr. Himmelfarb. It is fallacious, and it must not be allowed to become an unchallengeable truism.

ELIOT D. BERNAT
Board of Directors
The American Council for Judaism
New York City

MILTON HIMMELFARB writes:

Let me first dispose of the flourishes at the beginning and end of Jerome Karabel's letter. I dealt with him not *ad hominem* but as representative of the "Best People," the "advanced and educated," whose present definition of justice and equality—Fair Shares for groups rather than No Discrimination against individuals—I called "bad for the Jews, and bad for America as well." I further noted that the advanced and educated Best People now tend to think Fair Shares require quotas, however queasy some of them may be about using the word. (A recent internal document of the American Civil Liberties Union likes "benign quotas.") Mr. Karabel says that I only allege but do not document that he favors quotas. While the word does not appear in his article, his argument necessarily implies the thing, and he does not say, "I am against quotas."

He calls Tawney to witness against me and other selfish and misguided people who would limit culture to the classes and bar it to the masses. Mr. Karabel quotes me about Mycenaean studies. Does he really suppose I believe the cultured person is someone who can read Linear B? My mention of Mycenaean studies had nothing to do with culture and everything to do with disinterested scholarship. Washington and Lincoln, Disraeli and Churchill; Conrad, Hemingway, and Agnon; John Stuart Mill and Ahad Ha'am—none attended a university. To listen to Mozart, look at Picasso, or read Dickens, you don't need to go to college. If tomorrow accounting or law or engineering or business administration or medicine were expelled from the university, on the day after tomorrow government and industry would see to their teaching and cultivation by other means. But

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if not in the university—or rather, in those relatively few universities where relevance has still to establish its tyranny—where are Mycenaean studies to be cultivated? To anyone who asks, What is the use of such useless scholarship?, the only answer is another question, What is the use of such useless things as art and philosophy? (Once, to someone who asked, What is the use of philosophy?, a philosopher retorted, What is the use of a baby? In those days it had not yet been proclaimed that a baby, especially an American one, is a disaster.)

If in 1940 a son of poor immigrants managed to leap over the barrier of discrimination into medical school, Mr. Karabel applauds that man's merit. But for Mr. Karabel the son of that son of poor immigrants can have no merit: if the grandson does well in exams, it is evidence not of merit but of privilege. And if the father continues to favor non-discrimination, now he is only rationalizing in order to justify his children's privilege. It is all rather odd.

There is the awkward fact that America is more democratic today, less discriminatory, than it was a generation ago, but a little verbal shift takes care of that. Instead of "more democratic" or "less discriminatory," simply say "quasi-meritocratic."

Now Christopher Jencks and his associates tell us that the way to redistribute income is to redistribute income. Trying to do it through the school doesn't work. What do they think, I wonder, about Karabel's strategy for redistributing income?

The theory of the value-adding function of higher education is charming. What it means is that Juilliard or Eastman or Curtis should concentrate on people like me, because raising us musically from grade Z to grade X would make a greater change in us than raising the talented from B to A would make in them. It is almost as good an idea as Samuel Butler's, about who should be in hospitals and who in jails.

For Mr. Karabel my "Podunk A. and M." proves I am an elitist—whatever that may mean. Would he have preferred the actual names of the universities shielded behind that trite alias? The names can be found in a publication of the American Council on Education, Roose and Andersen's *Rating of Graduate Programs,* 1970.

Has there ever been another American intellectual and statesman as democratic and egalitarian as Thomas Jefferson? In a famous letter Jefferson wrote to John Adams:

> . . . there is a natural aristocracy among men. The grounds of this are virtue and talents. . . . There is also an artificial aristocracy, founded on wealth and birth, without either virtue or talents. . . . The natural aristocracy I consider as the most precious gift of nature, for the instruction, the trusts, and government of society. . . . The artificial aristocracy is a mischievous ingredient in government, and provision should be made to prevent its ascendancy.*

I have been bemused by a problem Mr. Bernat raises inadvertently.

A member of the board of directors of the American Council for Judaism, writing on its letterhead, makes a public declaration:

> . . . the morale and cohesiveness of American Jews have, if anything, increased with the advent of Israel. . . .

The problem is this: When something so extraordinary happens, what is the right blessing? *Sheheheyanu*—"Who has kept us alive and sustained us to reach this season"? That seems too ordinary. We say it on every festival and even, we are instructed, on buying new clothes. I have concluded that the best of several alternatives is to praise Him "Who wrought a miracle for me in this place."

That article by Professor Neusner is exceptionally fine—dialectical and supple in a way that Mr. Bernat's heavy-handed manner of citation does not begin to suggest. The passage cited is part of a meditation about the continuing legitimacy of the Diaspora, and I daresay that most Israelis would agree.

One can imagine Hasidim of the Satmar kind persisting after a destruction of Israel (*absit omen*); but other Jews? The blow would be too crushing, too mortal to our spirit and our very will to live. Such survivors would be no less—how shall I say?—paleontological than the Samaritans of our own day, who are also survivors. Can *that* give us hope and consolation?

* See also Paul Seabury's "The Idea of Merit," on p. 41.—Ed.

Growing Old

To the Editor of Commentary:

I was . . . surprised to find an article on Simone de Beauvoir written by a man ["Beauvoir's Last Revolt," August]. Aside from the need to hear from women on women . . . it's like asking a French poet to comment on a Chinese poet. It can be done, but unless the Frenchman has steeped himself in Chinese poetry and culture, his insights will be blunted. For example, Mr. Grossman asks whether aging is so painful to Beauvoir because she, in particular, is experiencing it, and then he wonders whether children or grandchildren might have mitigated her agony. I feel he's speaking in a foreign tongue.

First, having a child or grandchild does not necessarily help women come to terms with the menopause and approaching senility. On the contrary, for some intelligent women who are reaching maturity without accomplishment, children are seen as "pulling at me" and (perhaps because they've been given permission by the advent of Women's Lib, which functions as an ethical synthesizer) are thought of as "takers." The anguish of these women is as great as Beauvoir's. I believe they suffer because they have not been gifted with the quality of motherliness (nor are they particularly loving); and, unfortunately, women (and men) have until recently been thought of as breeders, but their suitability as parents has not been considered.

Second, looking at their suffering, I find myself thinking of them as societal victims on another level. From what I know of these women, and from Mr. Grossman's account, their problem appears to be a displaced vanity. . . . "The eyes of Others are mirrors, crueler even than her [Beauvoir's] own, and she feels changed, diminished, twisted in reflection. Aging is a mutilation of her body and therefore of herself. . . ."

I've not read *The Coming of Age*, but I find myself wondering whether Beauvoir's displaced vanity was allowed to develop until it choked her because she is a woman. Surely you don't stop relating to other people simply because your skin is wrinkled and your body shrinking? . . .

Nan Mizrachi

New York City

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To the Editor of Commentary:

"... If Beauvoir is to be believed, the worst thing about getting old is not getting sick, or even losing strength and power—it is receiving the dehumanizing look of Others," states Edward Grossman. If I am to be believed, many of the statements made in the course of Mr. Grossman's article dehumanize me, especially the following:

> Put archetypically, a movie actress ought to be more profoundly affected by the very thought of menopause (or even the loss of looks that begins for a woman at thirty-five). . . .
>
> When, in biological terms, she loses the ability to bear children, and her body loses the last of its power to excite desire. . . .
>
> And, if old age is a mutilation, it begins early for women—at the menopause, in fact, or earlier.

I hate to think what power over me a look will one day have. . . .

Mr. Grossman points out that Beauvoir specifically in this book seems to depart from the lines of her former work. Whereas she formerly felt that she could take each stage in her life "cheerfully," she now finds herself "afraid." "It is in the autumn and winter of life that woman is freed from her chains," she had once written. Now, she speaks of anguish. . . .

Beauvoir gives examples of decline with age that she has chosen from literature. For Mr. Grossman the most affecting ones are the pictures of the decline of women. Beauvoir herself, according to Mr. Grossman, feels that there are few comparatively happy old people and that old age is more painful and humiliating for a woman than for a man.

Simone de Beauvoir, as Mr. Grossman has adequately pointed out, has been a woman who has given of herself, an important part of herself, to her work. Whereas previously, as Mr. Grossman has also pointed out, Beauvoir was influenced, perhaps too much, by Marx, Freud, and Sartre, she now reveals that her anguish is part of her "situation" as a woman, a woman living in a world where the dominance is perceived finally as male, where the "look of Others" is the "look" of the male upon the female. . . .

Another dehumanizing aspect of the self-image that a woman "rebels" against is the unimportance

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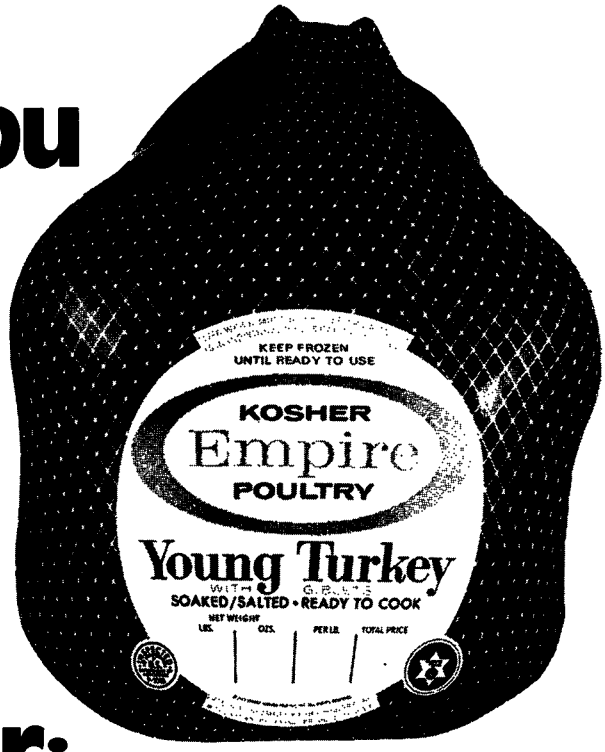

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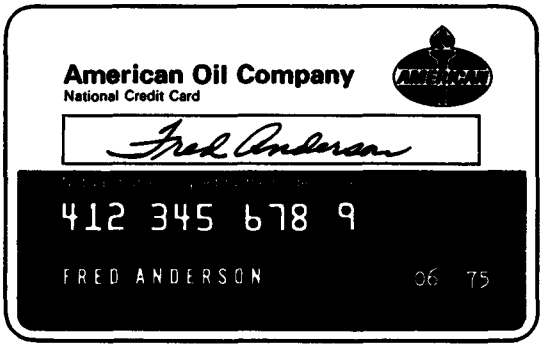

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of work, her own work, in her lifetime. For myself, I have found, and it is something that I must defend constantly, that the only time I feel that oneness within myself that I can think of as health is when I am working. . . .

HELEN DUBERSTEIN
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Having myself reviewed several of Simone de Beauvoir's books in the French original, I fully agree with Edward Grossman's brilliant article. I am glad to see that he has noted some of the rather exasperating sloppinesses of Mlle. de Beauvoir's statements of fact about certain persons. Believe it or not, Mr. Grossman and I are, to my knowledge, the only reviewers of *The Coming of Age* in this country to have discovered Beauvoir's strange claim that Lou Andreas-Salomé was Jewish. But there are many more "mistakes" of this type, some of which betray a rather grotesque ignorance. Let me quote my own findings (*French Review*, December 1970): "In connection with Freud, Mlle. de Beauvoir discusses Lou Andreas-Salomé, about whom she makes some rather erroneous statements. Lou von Salomé, the daughter of a Czarist Russian general, was not Jewish nor did she 'discover sexuality' only at the age of thirty-five. . . . Concerning Freud, the author [Beauvoir], falling for certain defeatist remarks of the father of psychoanalysis in private correspondence, falsely claims that he had lost his creative power and 'could not work any more' as early as 1926, whereas Freud published several important works during the following decade. . . . There are other odd mix-ups, such as *'L'Avenir d'une civilisation'* [*sic*] instead of *'L'Avenir d'une illusion.'* . . . These . . . errors could easily have been avoided if the author had taken the trouble to check her sources a little more carefully."

HENRY WALTER BRANN
Takoma Park, Maryland

EDWARD GROSSMAN writes:

Nan Mizrachi declares that she hasn't read *The Coming of Age*. Reading her letter, I find myself wondering whether she has read my article on it. I wrote that having children or grandchildren most probably wouldn't have made aging significantly less painful for Simone de Beauvoir: "she is what she is," I wrote, meaning that she is a woman who would have made the same hard demands on the world and on herself had she chosen to be a parent. Even though I am a man, I granted Beauvoir the right to the choice she did make, and saluted her bravery in facing up to its consequences.

There ought to be no need to add that I don't equate personal worth with young good looks—that would "dehumanize" me even more than it would Helen Duberstein.

Book Note

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

An addendum to the publication data in Sonya Rudikoff's *Why Some Children Don't Speak* [October]: Clara Claiborne Park's *The Siege*, recently available only through libraries, has just been republished at $2.95 as an Atlantic-Little, Brown paperback.

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The Idea of Merit

Paul Seabury

Our Honours, and our Commendations be Due to the Merits, not Authoritie.
—Robert Herrick,
"Merits make the Man," 1648

THE current American social squall has caused a number of logistical difficulties for beleaguered liberals. How do we protect certain long-taken-for-granted liberal virtues at a time when few things are taken for granted? Going to the closet for some old, trusted weapon, we likely as not find it rusted from disuse, or inappropriate for the occasion, or we find we have forgotten how to use it, if ever we did know.

So it was for me a couple of years ago at Berkeley during the Free Speech Movement convulsion. One afternoon at its furious height, I went off to read and think about the Essential Nature of the University, thus better to grasp what the real issue was. I sought and found Ortega y Gasset's fine book, *The Mission of the University*. But by the end of the afternoon I realized I had wasted my time; the book was useless to me. The circumstances of Spanish universities in the 1930's were wholly alien to the situation I was involved in, and Ortega's prescriptions pointless. What else should I have read? I still am not sure.

In such confusion, we are especially caught off guard when militant enthusiasts use intellectual arguments for profoundly anti-intellectual causes. Normal life seems always to require that its beneficiaries take too much for granted, and thus it is that lazy innocents are not the only ones who are condemned to repeat history because they never learned it.

Much the same intellectual difficulty afflicts us now, in the current onslaught upon the idea and practice of merit and excellence in American occupations and institutional life. Merit, and its twin, equal opportunity, have been thought to be firmly woven into the fabric of American democratic thought. Possibly they still are. But the tension at the seams is rather great.

PAUL SEABURY, professor of political science at the University of California at Berkeley, contributed "HEW & the Universities" to our February number. The present article is adapted from the Samuel Lieber Memorial Lecture which Mr. Seabury delivered at the New School for Social Research last month.

Let us consider the idea of merit. As a conception of justice, it means "to each according to his abilities," or in another and closely related sense, "to each according to his works." In these two combined senses merit advances and rewards according to ability and accomplishment, rather than according to status, preferment, or chance. But we are now told by the critics of merit that either its standards are themselves unfair and discriminatory, or that the fair and uniform employment of such standards leads to unequal and unjust results. And there are also those who argue that the idea of merit is in any case no more than the means whereby an abhorrent middle-class system coopts its new retainers. (Edgar Z. Friedenberg, who among other things is a consultant to the College Entrance Examination Board, has recently written, for instance: "A people dedicated to competition and manipulation surely find their social preferences sustained by the kind of testing that has evolved. Granted the College [Entrance Examination] Board, Robert McNamara follows.")

In current American circumstances, when the anti-hero cult is very prominent, it is difficult to believe how recently the ethos of merit and achievement was honored in American life, even to excess. Only a decade ago, John Gardner's *Excellence* (1961) achieved best-seller status, a bit perhaps like the glorious appearance of Minerva the Owl at twilight. A little earlier, in the 1950's, there were two quite different but equally formidable figures who argued forcefully for merit and achievement: Adlai Stevenson and Hyman Rickover, both of whom appealed, if for somewhat different reasons, for an improvement in the qualitative performance of American life. Throughout that entire period, in fact, the dominant American emphasis in training and education and advancement was more and more upon improving quality.

But of course the idea of merit goes back beyond the 1950's and has the deepest of roots in American democratic thought. The case for merit in America was most authentically laid out by Jefferson, whose view of an open democratic society depended upon his conception of a natural aristocracy based on "virtue and talents." This he contrasted with what he had noticed in Europe: an "artificial aristocracy founded on

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wealth and birth without either virtue or talents." The natural aristocracy, he asserted, was "the most precious gift of nature for the instruction, the trusts, and the government of society," and education was needed to foster it. No wonder, then, that Jefferson wished most to be remembered as founder of the University of Virginia; he might have been memorialized also for his establishment of universal primary education in his state. Such acts, and others for which he was responsible like the abolition of the right of entail and of primogeniture, "laid the axe to the root of Pseudo-aristocracy." Now, given equal opportunity, talent and merit would naturally arise in great numbers, from among the rich and the poor alike.

John Adams—more of a realist than Jefferson—raised a special objection to his friend's optimism. "Nobility in Men," he replied, "is worth as much as it is in Horses Asses [*sic*] or Rams, but the meanest blooded puppy in the world, if he gets a little money, is as good a man as the best of them." Subsequent historical experience lent weight to Adams's warnings. In retrospect, we can note the many anti-meritocratic tendencies which crafty Americans devised: elitist, as to be seen in successful attempts of status groups to maintain privilege by denying merit as a means of access to it; populist, as to be seen in Jacksonian democracy's spoils system—which flaunted patronage in the face of skills and qualifications; and meliorative, as to be seen in efforts to check undesired consequences of cutthroat competition. Yet it is safe to say that none of these quite different countervailing tendencies, or all in combination, really succeeded in overwhelming the Jeffersonian ethic. The generations of American thinkers who succeeded Jefferson were agreed with him on the ethos of equal opportunity: rich and poor alike should be exposed to knowledge and skills; these would both equip and license entry into a broad, if competitive, world of opportunities and choices. The general quality of life would improve; arts and letters would flourish; all men would be evaluated against the common standards of their calling.

IN CONSIDERING the various current arguments against merit, there is one powerful case which Jefferson's contemporaries probably never thought of. It is that merit, as both a right and a standard, is a device to inveigle people into bourgeois society. Both the knowledge purveyed, and the criteria used to discover which persons have best or adequately absorbed it, are now deemed by some as nothing more than techniques by which a technological system perpetuates itself. The anti-skill culture out of which this critique emerges is at the same time an anti-intellectual culture, attacking the authority of knowledge and reasoning processes in general in the name of intuition and creativity. Kingsley Amis and Robert Conquest, in their sardonic *Short Educational Dictionary*, provide an introduction to the attitudes of this culture:

> *alphabet* a set of arbitrary . . . signs which children are still often compelled to learn by rote; usually taught, moreover, in an arbitrary order.
>
> *examination* an irrelevant, external test purporting to check a student's knowledge by a set of written questions often repugnant to his personality, and failing to take into account the distractions inevitable in a concerned life.
>
> *standards* irrelevant academic concept designed to exclude or penalize students distinguished for either concern or creativity or both.
>
> *underachieving* coming out at the bottom in tests designed to measure . . . ability to memorize irrelevant facts and accept bourgeois indoctrination.

In addition to attacking knowledge and reason in the name of spontaneity and intuition, this movement also attacks them in the name of equality. According to Edgar Friedenberg, the existing educational system is a process designed to prevent the "underclass" from getting in, and to keep the middle class on top. (Yet he also seems to think that tests and standards are capricious, as when he says that they are "not so much a poker game as a crap game, and some young people have decided not to take any more crap.") Real education, for Friedenberg, is "shared experience, and only that." Its principal object is to establish a sense of "community among students." To that end, he (and many others) would abolish skill and competitive criteria in evaluations, and even rate competitiveness negatively. For, he argues, "tests that select out for a common reward people whose special excellence is in competition and the fragmentation of experience are not going to bring together a group who are likely to enrich one another, or to care for those dependent on their leadership."

A fraternity rush group of yore could not have put the case for discriminatory exclusion of bright and ambitious students more candidly, though they might have been ashamed to put it in writing, or demand that it be codified as college policy. In another respect Friedenberg in fact would go further than the Greek-key anti-intellectuals dared. He would have colleges so devise admissions systems and testing as to exclude persons deemed psychic or motivational deviants. "A liberal and permissive school ought," he writes, "to be able to defend itself against the influx of punitive, authoritarian, or extremely passive-dependent people," though it should not "exclude any social class or ethnic group *as such*" (italics mine). "The psychological instrument, so

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long as it is permitted to retain its natural cultural contamination, should be quite sufficient." One wonders what Friedenberg would recommend as instruments for authoritarian, non-permissive schools.

In any event, returning to the main point, Friedenberg is consistent with the radical counter-culture even though that culture is secessionist with respect to American institutions and he is content to work within our institutions: "Informal institutional demands of the schools are usually explicitly dehumanizing. . . .[T]he best protection for the civil liberties of students is to be found in distinguishing sharply between society's right to demand certain skills . . . and its practice of requiring that these be exhibited as aspects of a pedantic and constricted pattern of tastes."*

Ideas must fight a grinding battle with circumstance. The idea of merit and that of the natural aristocracy currently are challenged not only by secessionists and those within institutions who are under their influence, but also by many who would like either to save or to improve the quality of society. In her recent book *On Violence,* Hannah Arendt has revived interest in the dangers of meritocracy—a problem raised over ten years ago by Michael Young. "What grounds are there," Miss Arendt asks, "for supposing that the resentment against a meritocracy, whose rule is exclusively based on 'natural' gifts, that is, on brain power, will be no more dangerous, no more violent than the resentment of earlier oppressed groups who at least had the consolation that their condition was caused by no 'fault' of their own?"

While it is hard to reply to a rhetorical question, I think it possible to detect a certain narcissism and at the same time a certain self-flagellation at work among those intellectuals who equate merit with superior brain power like their own. The domain of merit is not exclusively that of the highest mental achievers, nor is it exclusively confined to qualities of mind. Dictionaries say that merit signifies reward (or punishment) due; qualities or actions constituting the basis of one's deserts; character or conduct deserving reward, honor, or esteem. In addition, our commonsensical view of it combines the notion that effort plus better performance represent good grounds for reward and advancement; and that it is possible to employ objective criteria of various sorts which, however crude, will enable us to make such distinctions reasonably fairly.

This has nothing special to do with the *layering* of society. Any occupation or profession, however inefficient or corrupt, at least must make a pretense of equitably rewarding, honoring, and advancing its members on some grounds other than caprice, favoritism, lottery, or automatic tenure principles; for were it otherwise, it is hard to imagine how it could even claim to be just or fair in its practices, or exempt from harsh complaints from victims of its shoddy practices. Indeed, it is hard to imagine that the merit principle was wholly absent in static, traditionalist status societies.

Finally, I think Jefferson to have been essentially correct when he stressed the need to "diffuse" knowledge. It could hardly be said that the logical consequence of this would be to construct a new status-pyramid of excellence, to replace the status pyramid of a pseudo-aristocracy of prescriptive rights. The diffusion of talents throughout society, already observed in Tocqueville's time, guaranteed checks against this.

STILL, there are important truths in some critiques of the merit system as we have recently used it. There is good reason to suppose that some standardized tests, taken too seriously or too often employed, can stultify authentic creativity or create the impression that achievement is simply the act of test-passing. Evaluation can become an end in itself; it may favor test drudges; standards may invidiously contain cultural values irrelevant to the skill being tested; psychic injury may result from the anxieties entailed in anticipating or taking tests. To modify a proverb of the late Dean Acheson, a farmer does not pull up his carrots every night to see how they are growing, nor would a carrot benefit from such benign surveillance. Tocqueville long ago pointed to one unintended by-product of a social system which abandons prescriptive rights for rights of achievement: namely, the constant uncertainty as to where one stood, and the anxious need constantly to reaffirm one's competence in order to reaffirm one's tenuous status. And then there is also the moral effect of replacing prescriptive aristocracy with performance democracy, which is to elevate the principle of interest over that of duty.

Yet none of these special arguments against the practice of merit and equal opportunity denies the principle. Rather, they expose its imperfections, and some suggest ways of dealing with the defects. This is not, however, the case with the principle of equality of results, which does thrust at the heart of the principle of equal opportunity and merit. To that challenge I now turn.

A COMMENDABLE but innocent habit of some optimists, until recently at least, has been to assume that in the land of opportunity the just society and the meritocratic society would be one and the same. Now we are abundantly told otherwise. It is not simply, of course, that in the real world equal justice is never wholly consummated,

* *Report of the Commission on Tests,* College Entrance Board, Briefs (1970), pp. 34-6.

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nor that it is a foolish aspiration. (Paul Valéry once wrote that if all men were equally enlightened, equally critical, and equally courageous, no society would be possible.) The problem is that the ideal of equal opportunity has some harsh impediments (some of which can be eliminated) to its attainment in the real world, while the closer we come to its attainment, the more we become aware of disparities of result. Some of these disparities in fact become more starkly visible the fairer the procedures employed; and some show up more visibly in certain sociological categories and groups than in others. Equality of opportunity sets the fair rules of the running; but the new ethic of equality of results would investigate the winning, on behalf of disadvantaged constituencies.

It is clear that the ideal of merit, like justice, should be blind to irrelevant distractions. But it may be that its companion ideal of equal opportunity can never be wholly free from discriminatory impediments. In America, very real, though often concealed, barriers to access have always existed. Jefferson had slaves, and Abraham Lincoln had a wife who could not vote, much less run for office. Certain minority groups have either been denied access to employment, or rendered incapable of benefiting from jobs or training because of past social evils. All this suggests the need for redress, if not retribution.

Yet even in the fairest of all procedures, where arbitrariness has been banished, and where steps have been taken to overcome the effects of inherited disadvantage of every kind, equal opportunity will all too often fail to produce the equality of results which some would wish. The consequence is that those who value equality of results over equal opportunity, and over the principle that all men should be judged and treated according to their individual merits, are attempting to lead us into a new era of discrimination on the basis of race, creed, and color.

Is discrimination as objectionable when pressed on behalf of previously disadvantaged minority groups as when pressed on behalf of advantaged ones? There is now, as well we know, a strong push for proportionality of group representation not simply in schools and universities, but in the professions, business, and industry.* The principal device is the quota, although the new discrimination can operate without specific quotas as well. Beaumarchais's point in *The Marriage of Figaro* was that exclusionary practices in 18th-century aristocratic France were repugnant precisely because they had nothing to do with a person's individual qualities and skills, but everything to do with his arbitrarily assigned status. Is the situation any different where reverse discrimination is concerned? The gravity of the current situation in America can be seen in the fact that what began several years ago as a method of alleviating the black man's condition has since spread like wildfire to other groups and categories—ethnic, sexual, or chronological—each claiming the right to preferential treatment. In India when a system of reverse discrimination was established, the stigmata of deprivation were mysteriously transformed into signs of grace. Much the same seems to be happening here as one group after another proclaims its handicaps and oppressions in the hope of becoming eligible for compensatory advantages.

There are those who advocate reverse discrimination as a temporary measure, but as the experience of India has also shown, the beneficiaries of quotas or other forms of preferential treatment come to look upon them as prescriptive rights. Quotas, once established as institutional practice, prove as vigorously able to perpetuate themselves as do Texas oil-depletion allowances, and for the very same reason.†

Race, sex, and age: these are our most elementary human attributes, in the possession of which we have absolutely no choice. We have them regardless of what we seek to become, or what we actually become. They are qualities with which we commence and end life. But with respect to what as individuals we may hope to gain from or contribute to a common culture, they have very little to say. One does not aspire to be a male or middle-aged or old. These are facts of existence. To imagine that one can or should realize or establish one's identity upon them is to debase one's humanity, which consists in possibilities. Yet in the strange winds of American change, these categories are now to be seen emblazoned on the gonfalons of reform and liberation. In the current view, equal opportunity can only be deemed truly equal if in its results it places a proportional representation of each biological category in the positions of effective status within every major institution.

As OBSERVERS of the Indian scene noted decades ago, the quest for equality of results does no justice to criteria of excellence; what is less noticed is that it does no

* See Elliott Abrams, "The Quota Commission," COMMENTARY, October 1972.

† I am indebted to Professor Donald E. Smith's important study, *India as a Secular State*, for his account and analysis of this sad experiment, which bears many drab parallels to the current American situation. It is somewhat out of date, however, in its remarks about the relevance of the Indian situation to possible American developments. Smith wrote, in 1963, that in the United States it would be regarded as "patently unfair" to favor race groups with state aid. "[S]ome Negroes are professional people with high incomes, and there are many white tenant farmers . . . whose standard of living is not much above that of bare subsistence. But apart from the unfairness of such a system, it would meet with strong objections from the Negro community itself, which would resent the official label of social or economic backwardness."

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justice to authentic human need either. In the current affirmative-action crusade in America, one wonders whatever happened, for example, to the poor. A logician unfamiliar with the nuances of the American cultural revolution but knowledgeable about the vagaries of human statistical classification systems might well note the obvious difficulty which the poor as such have in becoming eligible for affirmative-action handouts.

For while the proportion of poor blacks to blacks-as-a-whole clearly is greater than the proportion of poor whites to whites-as-a-whole, the total number of poor whites is considerably greater than the total number of poor blacks. Yet under the categories of the disadvantaged on which affirmative-action programs are based, the only poor people eligible for reverse discrimination are those fortunate, or unfortunate, enough to be both poor *and* disadvantaged. (Many in the disadvantaged categories, needless to say, have never known poverty.)

Were the American reformist assault on the merit system simply expedited by means of formal quotas, and their twin sister, goals, the condition would at least have the unusual advantage of being open and above-board: one would know what was going on by reading the vast computer print-outs which, presumably, the authorities would collect and disseminate. (By way of contrast, in the old bad days of bad quotas, the data most likely were banked in the back of a prudent Dean's mind; they certainly were not published in college catalogues.) But this is not the case today when quotas are supplemented and sometimes replaced by other devices. Examinations may be abolished; tests of skill eliminated or downgraded; IQ tests eliminated—the argument being that if the tests do not produce the required sociological results they are defective and should go. In my home city, Berkeley, affirmative-action programs now call for precisely such abandonment of certifications. One proposal goes so far as to advocate that previous felony convictions not be considered in the employment of civil servants. Why, one wonders, do we not simply have recourse to a lottery? It may not be meritorious but at least, like justice, it is blind.

It was said of the American spoils system, which had its own informal rules of favoritism before testing came in (i.e., party loyalty and patronage), that the influence of its example corrupted the whole body politic. But that system was at least not codified or *required* by law. The patently discriminatory implications of affirmative action, however, have all the force of law behind them and are likely to be all the more corrupting both to the body politic and to the life of the society in general. For a complex society like our own, after all, depends on the skills of the individuals composing it. Concerns of human safety, convenience, and the quality of our collective life are of as great consequence as our concern for equal protection of the laws. We *do* want a qualified surgeon when we need an operation. We assume a skilled pilot, especially when it is we who are on the plane. We want a clever lawyer when we are in trouble. We want the telephone to work, and our mail to come to us, and not to someone down the street. We want competent teachers for our children. In universities we want high standards of scholarship and research and we want them visible also as exemplars of excellence. In short, we want the entire complex of amenities and necessities in a condition which we can reasonably trust.

Our existence places us at the mercy of persons, often invisible to us, who are certified for their qualities. While we may argue about the manner in which, in real life, skill and competence are elicited and ascertained, we can hardly argue that there are no such things as skill and competence or that there is no way of measuring them. But there are those among us who do make this argument and those who also accept it, and its spreading influence may well constitute the single greatest threat to the quality of our lives today.

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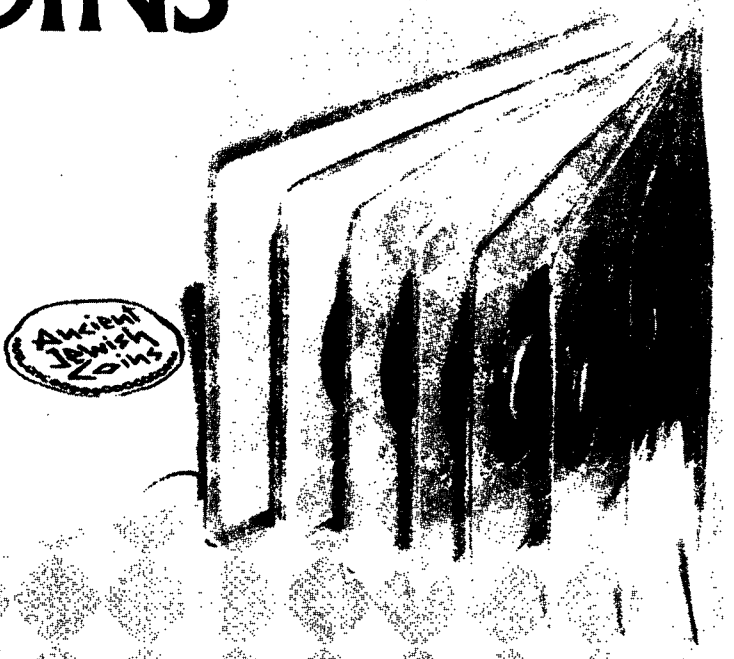
ANCIENT COINS OF ISRAEL

103 B.C.E.–70 C.E.



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From Auschwitz to Prague: A Memoir

Heda Margolius-Kovály

PEOPLE have often asked me about the Stalin years. Didn't you know? Didn't you know that the Communists had reopened the concentration camps, that people were again being beaten and tortured, that humanity had again become a privilege—and a stroke of luck?

No, we did not know. If someone had told us, we would not have been capable of believing it. In the 1950's foreign broadcasts used to speak of what was happening behind the official facade in our country, but to us it seemed simply proof that "the imperialists" were lying about us. It isn't hard for a totalitarian regime to keep people ignorant. Once a man decides to believe, it becomes difficult for him to know. Once he exchanges freedom for understood necessity, for socialism, for the glory or greatness of the homeland, or for any of the substitutes that often seem so persuasive, he gives up truth. Slowly, a drop at a time, life begins to drain out of him as surely as if he had slashed his veins, and he becomes incapable of knowing.

LET ME tell you one episode. In the last concentration camp I passed through we worked in a brick kiln, owned by a civilian, far from the camp. It was late autumn, beautiful but cold. In the morning, when we stood for roll call long before dawn, the ground was covered with a heavy blanket of hoarfrost, which would not melt until noontime. We had nothing to wear except our brief shifts made of burlap sacking, no underwear, no shoes. We used to collect scraps of paper at the work site, especially the heavy cement sacks, and even though it was strictly forbidden we used to wrap them around our bodies, under our shifts, so that we would freeze a little less. The morning roll call took two hours, then a grotesque little train made up of flatcars with two long benches carried us the hour's distance to work. Then a half-hour march to the brick kiln, where we passed along bricks for twelve hours, then the trip back to the camp, another roll call, a bowl of weak turnip soup and a piece of bread, and finally a short and restless night.

For most of the girls the trip on the train was the worst part. In the course of the hour we would freeze through and through; at the end of the ride, we did not so much get off as fall off, and it would take us half a day's work to warm up a bit. But I used to love those trips. The track led over an underground factory complex. In many places steam rose from the ground, and the forest was broken up by mysterious iron structures and fantastically tangled pipes. The sun would just be rising, and because a heavy fog blanketed the ground, the sun's rays broke in and dyed it now deep pink, now orange, now gold or blue. Out of that glowing mist dark silhouettes of trees and bushes appeared, flowed toward us, passed by and disappeared again. There were several clusters of trees that seemed especially beautiful. I used to wait for them each day: I still remember one small mound where a young pine lay uprooted and a second, a handsome, symmetrically-shaped tree stood upright and serious beside it, as if it were standing guard over the body of a fallen comrade.

On Sundays we would work inside the camp, but usually there were no meals because the woman commandant had calculated that even turnips for a thousand people could be turned into a pretty penny. So on Sundays we had to fast until the managers of the factories where we worked started complaining that on Mondays the girls kept fainting and were not worth their cost.

The brick kiln, which rented about fifty of us from the camp, belonged to an odd character. I think he must have been Russian or German-Russian by origin. He was thin, gray-haired, and wore a Russian-style, black, belted shirt. To our amusement, he constantly threatened that if we did not work for the victory of the Reich, the

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HEDA MARGOLIUS-KOVÁLY, a survivor of the Lodz Ghetto and Auschwitz, was the wife of Rudolf Margolius, a high official in Czechoslovakia's first Communist government who was executed, together with Rudolf Slánsky, in the purge trials of 1952. During the relative liberalization of the 1960's, she became one of Czechoslovakia's leading translators of contemporary American fiction, but following the Soviet occupation of that country in 1968, she was forced to leave and now lives in the United States. In compiling her memoirs, Mrs. Margolius-Kovály collaborated with ERAZIM KOHÁK, a Czechoslovak philosopher currently teaching at Boston University, who edited and translated them. The entire volume will soon be published by Horizon Press under the title *The Victors and the Vanquished.*

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Russians would come and kill us all. One Monday, after another Sunday fast, a trainload of coal arrived at the kiln and we were ordered to unload it as fast as possible. The coal came in huge chunks and was mixed with heavy stones. Few of us were strong enough to pick up a shovel. After several hours most of the girls had fallen down on the piles of coal, exhausted into a state of unconsciousness. Then the owner of the brick kiln arrived, furious. "What kind of workers are you, anyway? Don't you even know how to hold a shovel? I am not paying for you to have you lie around here!"

I don't know what got into me. Perhaps I was beside myself with hunger, but I threw down my shovel and started shouting at him. I demanded what right he had to scream at us, that we were students and educated women and if he wanted us to do pick-and-shovel work he should at least make sure we were treated as well as laborers. The girl lying on the coals nearest me grabbed my ankles and tried to drag me down to the ground to silence me, but I could not stop screaming. The man looked at me for a while, but to everyone's amazement did not reach for his pistol, did not call a guard, just turned around and left. For the rest of the day we worked in terror, wondering what my mad scene would mean for us all. But nothing happened.

THE following day, as soon as we picked up our shovels, the owner showed up. *"Wo ist die Studentin?"* he asked. The fury had long since gone out of me; I was stiff with fear and was preparing myself to die as he led me out of the kiln. But that strange man simply announced, dryly and almost courteously, that from then on I would work at the furnace, bringing coal from the piles in a wheelbarrow and firing the furnaces. To work under a roof, in warmth, was the greatest dream of all inmates, but this work was heavy labor even for two men. I could never have managed were it not for my fellow workers at the furnace, POW's, Frenchmen, good lads who came to my aid again and again and often did most of the work for me.

One evening the owner came in with two Frenchmen and ordered them to help me bring in a supply of coal. About an hour later he came back, chased them out, and asked me to sit beside him on a stone ledge by the wall of the furnace and then said only, "Tell me about it."

For the rest of my life I shall not forget that dark cavern, the black walls flashing with the rays from the fire, the old man, dressed in black, who listened and listened and seemed to shrink away as if with every sentence a piece of him withered. I have lived through something like that only once more, one other time—with my own child, when I finally dared tell him how his father had died.

And so I spoke of the camp in Lodz, where cesspool cleaners whistled Beethoven at work and where a hundred thousand human beings died of starvation or were murdered; I told of the trains arriving constantly from Polish villages, bringing men with bloody heads and women wrapped up in scarves. When the trains left, the women started unwrapping their shawls and pulling out babies, many already suffocated but some still living, saved from German bayonets. Several months later the SS would come, pile those same babies into wagons and drive them off to the gas chambers. I told of the public executions and men left hanging on the gallows for weeks while we walked by on our way to work; of freight cars full of bloody clothes, which we tore into strips and wove into mats for German tanks so that the soldiers would not freeze their feet. And I told of the time when the front lines finally came so close that we could hear the noise of the battle and a German colonel, all decked out in gold braid, called us together and declared, "You have nothing to fear. The camp must be evacuated but I give you my German officer's word of honor that nothing bad will happen to you and that you will be well cared for. . . ." A week later those who survived the transport in sealed cattle cars walked through the gate in the electrified wire fence, straight into the black smoke of Auschwitz.

By then I had forgotten where I was, to whom I was speaking. I saw once more the barracks of Auschwitz, a former horsestall, where a thousand completely shaved, half-insane girls were packed together, howling under the whips like a pack of wolves. The women in charge, as insane with fury as we with pain and horror, dashed back and forth in the path in the middle of the block and struck aimlessly with their whips at the girls crammed in the stalls. Over it all, Mrs. Stein from Prague stood, shaved bare like the rest of us, singing "The Fireflies Gather Around My Golden Hair" at the command of the block commandant who ordered that her barracks must be happy. I saw us all again kneeling on hard, sandy ground, supporting those who fainted because whoever fell would never rise again. It was a time when a girl had attempted escape and all of Auschwitz had to kneel all day and all night until she was caught. Then we had to stand at roll call and watch as they broke her arms and legs before hauling her off to a gas chamber.

I did not speak much of Auschwitz. Words can express only what a mind can hold, no one can describe hammer blows that dash his brains to tatters. But I explained in detail how we lived in the concentration camp from where we came daily to work. I told him that there were among us girls brought in recently, straight from their homes, and several dozen of them proved

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to be pregnant. One evening the matrons called them together, locked the main barracks after them, and we never saw those girls again. But in the morning the commandant ordered out a special detail to wash pools of blood from the barrack floor.

I don't remember what else I told him, but I know that all that time he did not say a word, and when I heard shouting and orders outside and got up to join my fellow prisoners for the return trip to camp, he remained sitting there, huddled with his head in his hands. That man lived in Nazi Germany, came into daily contact with the inmates of the concentration camp, and still he knew nothing—I am quite sure of it, he knew nothing. He thought we were common criminals, duly sentenced by a court of law for proven crimes.

Let me tell you one more story. A few months after the war was over, I took a trip to my father's birthplace, a forsaken little village near Benesov. It was a long trip, first by train, then on the bus. There was time to remember.

Once I had gone there with my parents in the winter. I was quite small then, the mountains and the countryside were covered with snow but my grandmother's cottage was warm with the fire of fresh-smelling wood. A spotted puppy played with me, newly-hatched chicks peeped in the brood bin under the bed, and grandmother welcomed us with cakes and huge walnuts. My father took me for a walk in the fields and showed me where he used to mind the geese. When we were coming back, it was dark. The fishpond was freezing over and grandmother waited for us on the threshold, tears in her eyes, because while we were out father's sister at the farm nearby had given birth to a baby girl. Grandmother said she was beautiful and that she would be called Martha after my mother. When little Martha grew a few years older, she died in a concentration camp. As her parents did, and her brothers and sisters—and grandmother.

After the war I did not go back to my uncle's farm; I did not know the people who had taken it over. My grandmother's cottage was neglected, everything seemed shrunken and tired. A gentle old neighbor unlocked it for me. She walked with me through the cottage, and told me, "This is where your grandmother put down her coffee just before the Germans came for her, and here's where she sat down to catch her breath. And I said to her, I said, 'Mrs. Bloch, don't be afraid. . . .'"

Can you understand it? Can you understand it? I know there was nothing anyone could do, but they were taking away an eighty-six-year-old grandmother to a horrible death—and the village where she had lived all her life, where everyone had loved her, could say nothing more than "Mrs. Bloch, don't be afraid. . . ."

* * *

After the war and again now I often meet people who are genuinely puzzled by the fascination that Communist slogans of revolution and dictatorship hold for recent victims of another revolution and another dictatorship. Sometimes they ask me how a Jew could be a Communist. Rationally, there is no answer for any of it. But there are other considerations. For many people, the war was a hard test. For us, it was a complete trauma. It meant a wiping out of everything we thought of ourselves, of everything we had taken for granted about people, history, human life, and even ourselves, of everything we had learned from our teachers and our parents. Our personal experiences before the war were no help in trying to come to terms with the war, the occupation, Nazism. Masaryk's democracy convinced us that some things simply could not happen any more. And suddenly not only could they happen, they were happening—and in far worse form than we could imagine. Before the war we had half-heard in school that long ago, in the Middle Ages, there had been some sorts of torture and persecution, but that could hardly weigh down the minds of us young, future citizens of a free and democratic state. When it happened in our time, it felt like the end of the world. It seemed to us that we were living through a complete break in the evolution of mankind, through a total collapse of man as a rational being.

The sudden collapse of personal identity was probably even worse. Not only Jews suffered from it, but also many others—good men, not traitors—who began to wonder just what and who they were, whether one could even speak of a Czech nation and whether that nation had the right and the ability to exist. For the Jews it was worse, especially for those, like my family and my husband Rudolf's, who had for generations thought of ourselves as Czechs. Until Hitler took over our country, it simply never occurred to me that there could be some basic difference between me as a Jew and any other Czech. And then, suddenly, there was a difference. Rudolf once said to me, "When I used to read *Ivanhoe* and *The Three Musketeers,* I always imagined myself, like all the boys did, living in that age, fighting, fencing, doing brave deeds. Now it dawns on me, had I lived then, I would have been rotting in some ghetto." Suddenly, we were no longer Czechs, no longer citizens or students. We stopped being anything at all. Our value dropped lower than that of cattle; cattle were at least worth feeding. Finally, in Auschwitz, we became no more than troublesome trash to be burned *en masse* in an incinerator.

So much has been written about the physical suffering of people in the concentration camps, but I don't know whether anyone has succeeded

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in describing what happened in the minds of the inmates. I think for us in Bohemia the destruction of personal identity cut even deeper than, say, in the Nordic countries where people showed the Jews far greater sympathy and so proved to them that they still could count as one of them, as belonging. There the Jews could think of themselves as the particularly persecuted members of their nation, rather like hostages or prisoners of war.

The Communists were different, too, and that included the Jews who were Communists. They could feel that they suffered for an idea, for something they had chosen, not for what they were. They knew what to expect from the fascists, the collapse of the old order simply confirmed their convictions. Their world did not turn inside out like ours, but moved quite logically in the direction in which they fully expected the bourgeoisie to lead it.

Living in a democracy requires first of all a faith in man, confidence in oneself. Jews have often hated themselves for what they have suffered; for being the perennial focus of evil and hate. How much more difficult it would have been for the Germans without them. How many people joined the Nazis simply to pour out all their frustrations on the Jews or to pinch a small share of Jewish property! The Jews, by their very existence, helped the Nazis to power more than anyone else. It was quite natural that after the experience of the occupation most people found it impossible simply to return to the place where the war had caught them, as if nothing had happened. They wanted change—radical, fundamental change. Communism was constantly being proclaimed as the complete opposite of Nazism, as the movement that would restore precisely the values Nazism had destroyed: most of all, the dignity and solidarity of all humans. It came to seem that only another revolution could undo what the first one had committed.

* * *

THE men who, like Rudolf, staked their lives on their convictions did not do it casually. Theirs was a faith that men do not give up readily. The steady deterioration of the situation in Czechoslovakia after the coup was stubbornly explained by our people's inability to master the intensifying internal contradictions, which were in turn explained by international tension. As late as 1950 I heard people say, "The Soviets should interfere. If Stalin knew what is going on here he'd put things in order." And the wife of one of the pre-war Communists who had been arrested came to me for advice, wondering if she should turn to the Soviet Embassy for help and ask the Soviet Ambassador to intercede in behalf of her husband.

These were the years of the cold war. The iron curtain had cut us off from the world. Our newspapers printed every word that Vishinsky spoke in the United Nations, but never mentioned any replies. All we learned about the West was that there were strikes and that Communists were being persecuted. I remember the one bit of foreign news I heard on the radio with the dateline, Holland. It was the first mention of a Western country in months. I listened intently. The news item reported was that the Soviet folk dance collective had performed successfully in Holland. From the few authors who were being translated—such writers as Stefan Heym, Howard Fast, and Jack Lindsay—we could only conclude that the party was right, that the West finally found itself in the terminal stage of moral and economic disintegration. We seldom listened to foreign broadcasts, in part because of fear, in part because the jamming was so bad that it was hard to hear. Frequently someone would make out some news item only in part, would pass it on with further distortions, and people would respond with a wave of the hand, You see how they lie?

We had concluded that war was around the corner, and that police regimes had hardened all over the world, not only in our country. We all knew that our regime had many enemies in our own country and that the black market was flourishing, so that when the arrests and trials began, many people believed the accused must be guilty of something. Few people suspected at this stage that there was something badly out of joint with our system of justice. After all, the accused almost invariably confessed.

Once, years later, when the first cautious rehabilitations took place and a few of the former prisoners began to appear in public, I met my friend Pavel Eisler, who had never joined the party even though he was among its earliest enthusiasts and who had worked in the office of the President of the Republic until 1951. He was so agitated that he could hardly speak; for a few moments we just stood there in the street staring at each other. Then he told me, "I've just ridden on the same streetcar with a man from our office who had been arrested in 1950. At the time I was amazed, but I thought to myself, who would have guessed it, he seemed so nice and he was a traitor all along. They have recently released him, after six years. He had been completely innocent. Now he looks twenty years older, his hair is gray, his teeth are all gone. And when they were taking him away, I had just nodded my head thoughtfully! Imagine, I did not even feel sorry for him. My God, what fools we have been." Just so, what fools we had been. . . .

But at the time it would have been hard to be wise. The more the theaters repeated Gorky's statement, "Man—that has a proud ring to it,"

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the less did men come to mean in society. The better and happier our life appeared in the pages of our journals, the worse and sadder became our reality. The stores were besieged by endless lines of would-be customers, but there were shortages of practically everything. Every few months, there were rumors of a new currency reform, and people would buy up everything in the stores, frequently useless, defective items. The unceasing ideological barrage and the chaos in the economy took all pleasure out of honest work. Most workers looked around for some additional means of earning money, frequently semi-legal at best, and came to their regular jobs to rest up. The nationalized economy moved steadily downhill.

* * *

EARLY in 1952 we attended yet another reception, I no longer remember where it was held. As we got into the car, I said to Rudolf, "Look at that man at the corner. He's been there every time we've left the house in the last few days."

Rudolf laughed. "He's probably after one of the girls in the shop across the street. What's come over you? You need a rest; take a vacation, take the boy to the country."

At that reception I received the special attention of Comrade Minister Siroky, the chairman of the Cabinet. He took me by the arm, held my hand, and spent a long time strolling with me. He had never paid attention to me before. Comrade Morozov from the Soviet Trade Mission also was especially cordial on that occasion. As usual, vodka flowed in streams and we toasted people who would have served mankind best if they had forgotten to be born.

On January 10, after work, I stopped at the bank to get money for material for a new suit for Rudolf. When I got to the store I found it crammed with people fighting for every conceivable piece of merchandise. Behind me a line formed rapidly. I walked out disgusted, and noticed that the same scene was being repeated in every store. Prague looked again like an agitated ant hill. People hurried through the streets and lines formed on the sidewalks in front of every store. Evidently there was another rumor of a currency reform. At times those rumors originated at the Ministry of Domestic Trade. Whenever the warehouses were filled with defective, inferior merchandise, it was enough to hint that the government was planning another currency reform in which all savings would lose their worth or be confiscated, as before, and people would buy up everything they could lay their hands on, no matter how inferior.

I caught a streetcar home. Old Mrs. Machová was there, playing with my son. The boy was already attending nursery school and I was glad that many friends came to visit him, since the atmosphere of our home was not exactly relaxed.

After supper, when we had put him to bed, Mrs. Machová and I started complaining about the situation. We were in the thick of it when Rudolf came home. The two of us attacked him at once: "This is unbearable, so many years after the war and it is almost worse than during the occupation. How much longer can we go on like this?" And Mrs. Machová added, "It's all because people just don't expect anything good from the government any more. We don't have a government to serve the people, just to pester them and squash them. Whenever the government or the Central Committee meet, people shudder and wonder what nasty trick they will come up with next."

Mrs. Machová was one of those in whose name the Communist party made revolution. She was the daughter of a landless peasant and the wife of a worker, and had worked hard herself all her life. She had only a grade-school education, but she was probably the sharpest and wisest woman I have ever met. Rudolf had endless respect for her: he knew that her voice was the voice of the working class about which everyone spoke and which everyone ignored. Weakly and unhappily, he tried to pacify us and explain, but I was fast losing the last shreds of my patience. After Mrs. Machová left, Rudolf tried to embrace me and kiss me, for reconciliation and good night. I turned aside and pushed him away. For the first time in our life together we went to bed without reconciliation, without a word.

We did not speak to each other the following morning either, but that was not unusual, since I started work at seven, Rudolf an hour later. All morning I was troubled by my harshness of the evening before, and resolved to make it up that very day. For the first time I became aware of how much the constant fear and tension had exhausted and transformed me. I hardly recognized myself. I knew I couldn't go on this way, that I had to pull myself together or I would soon not be fit to live with. I had to get over my fears and premonitions. I had survived worse without turning into a bitter, repulsive shrew; I was determined not to give in to my moods now.

That afternoon I took my son for a long walk, bought fresh flowers for our apartment—flower shops were the only shops where there were no lines—and that evening I started to plan a new life. I would do exercises daily, starting today. I would go out among people, to the theater and concerts, I would spend more time with my child. I telephoned Rudolf at the office to ask when he would come home. He told me he had mountains of work but that he would hurry. I put Dvorák's "Humoresque" on the phonograph together with some other records, dug out *The Good Soldier Schweik* from the library, and resolved to spend a calm, pleasant evening.

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At ten o'clock I called Rudolf again. "I'm not finished yet, it will probably still take a while. Go to sleep, I'll come home as soon as I can."

Conscientiously I spent a half-hour doing exercises, a quarter-hour in the tub, and tried to convince myself that I was feeling light and easy. Everything depends on one's attitude, and I resolved that I would look at everything in perspective. No more depressions. But I could not sleep, and about half an hour before midnight I got up and took two aspirins.

The bell rang at one o'clock. Marenka, the girl who had lived in with us since I had started to work, and helped with the housework, came into the bedroom, all disheveled and sleepy-eyed, and stuttered, "There are five thugs here and they have Dr. Margolius's briefcase."

The world tilted and I felt myself falling, bound hand and foot, somewhere down, down, deep, where there is no bottom. Then I snapped awake. So it had happened. I had known it must happen, and now it had happened. It had happened again, it had happened.

IT WAS a strange moment. I accepted horror and misfortune as an old companion who had left me for a time and now returned. Suddenly, the old familiar feeling was back, the stiffness that helps us when there is no more hope from anyone except ourselves, when it has happened, when there is no more avoiding it. It is something that is hidden deep in us, so deep we are not even aware of it, but it comes to the rescue whenever misfortune bares its fangs and attacks.

I got up calmly, put on slippers, and brushed my hair. The only thing unusual was putting on Rudolf's robe instead of my own—it was far too long for me but it wrapped me all around.

I went out to the living room. The five men were there, one of them holding the fateful briefcase. They greeted me with exaggerated courtesy and announced that my husband had been arrested and they had been authorized to carry out a house search. I told them to go ahead and started to return to the bedroom. They stopped me, again most courteously, and told me that the law required my presence at the search to make sure all was in order.

I sat in a chair, lit a cigarette, and watched the comrades spread out through the apartment. The search was thorough: they moved systematically from room to room, opened and checked everything, shook the pages of every one of several hundred books, inspected and read every piece of paper. They looked under rugs, among the dishes, felt every seam of our clothes, examined shoes and toiletries. Some things they set aside. They found everything foreign especially interesting. A few days earlier someone had brought me a few packages of Albanian cigarettes. Each package included a slip with a slogan—since it ended in an exclamation point, I think it meant something like "Long live the working class!" My visitors carefully collected them and put them on their pile. One of the policemen who appeared to be in charge read through my private correspondence, added a few appreciative remarks about its literary quality, and confiscated one or two letters. He paid special attention to an old diary in which I noted things about my son, mostly weights and measures. Those numbers must have appeared to him as a particularly ingenious code: when he put the book on his pile, he gave me an especially devastating look. I stayed in my chair, wrapped in Rudolf's robe, and tried not to chain smoke.

When they started to barge into the child's room I protested. What if the boy wakes up and sees five strange men digging through his toys? The shock could have serious consequences. I offered them my word of honor that there was nothing in the room except the child's things. They insisted that they must search the whole apartment, but promised to move as quietly as possible. They kept their promise—they went through the room and all its contents with such expertise that the boy did not wake up.

Marenka's room came next. She had gone back to bed, and when one of the men opened her door, she came out with such vehement unwillingness and peppery commentary that the policeman emerged red all over. God bless her, I've often felt grateful to her: but of course as an exploited proletarian, she could get by with it with relative ease.

The last room was the one where I had my desk with all our most important papers and valuables. Among other things, there was a special file of correspondence with friends abroad, especially in England. At Rudolf's request I kept all their letters together, with carbons of my replies, so that we could prove there was nothing illicit.

But now everything had become illicit, even the simplest sentence could be interpreted as a secret code. Simply the fact of corresponding with someone in the West could damage Rudolf considerably. Dejectedly I awaited the triumphant outburst when this booty would be discovered. The man who opened the compartment was the one who had been most crude throughout the proceedings. All the others had treated me with courtesy, only he kept staring at me with undisguised hatred and making coarse, insulting remarks, until even the man in charge rebuked him with a sharp look. I watched him pick up the dangerous file, and I braced myself for the shouting. I could hardly believe my eyes when he did not bat an eyelash, closed the file rapidly, and pushed it back in, far behind other odds and ends stored there.

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In the meantime the man in charge dug through the drawer containing our household cash and two savings account passbooks. He announced he would have to confiscate everything, but set aside one bill which he put back in the drawer. It was a thousand-crown note in the old currency—worth perhaps twenty dollars. I pointed out that the confiscated money included my last month's salary, and that both passbooks were in my name. The man in command answered courteously that he had to follow instructions and that I could later request release of any personal property. He also confiscated all of Rudolf's documents, his camera, car keys and garage keys, and some other trivia. Then he turned to search my handbag. Before he could reach it, his crude colleague grabbed it, made some snide remark while taking it aside, near a lamp, and started digging through it. Then I remembered the ten thousand-crown bills I had withdrawn from the bank for Rudolf's suit. They were still there. The man rummaged through the bag, pulled out my compact and change purse, muttered another biting remark, examined a new calendar in which I had not yet written anything, and contemptuously tossed it on the pile of confiscated items. Then he snapped the bag shut.

By that time it was almost six in the morning. The policemen wrote up a protocol for me to sign and left.

* * *

THE following afternoon I went to Ludvík Frejka's office. I knew him only slightly, but he always seemed kind and reminded me vaguely of an uncle of mine. Now he received me as an elderly relative would, sitting hunched behind his desk, listening. He had heard of Rudolf's arrest, and gave the impression of knowing a great deal, none of it good. He sighed.

"My dear girl, you have no idea how highly I think of Rudolf and how much I'd like to help you. Some time ago I might have been able to do a few things. Then I was still a deserving old Communist. Today I am just a stinking kike. I cannot help you—or myself." A few weeks later he, too, was arrested.

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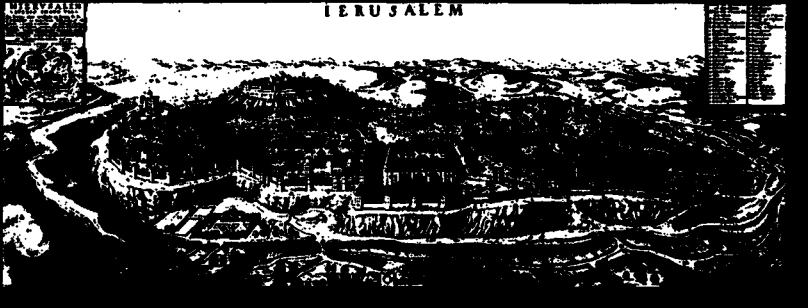

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An Address to the Entering Class at Harvard College, 1972

Daniel P. Moynihan

It is an honor to be a member of the freshman class of Harvard College, and not less a distinction to be asked to present one of the first of the many lectures that now await you. This is a venerable form of instruction and not, perhaps, the most efficient; but it is the way we do things here.

To be sure, other forms of instruction await you also: seminars, laboratories, above all, libraries; but lectures remain our preeminent mode of presenting ideas. They will matter most to you if you come with some information of your own on the subject to be presented so that the occasion becomes in effect an exchange: you not only listen, but respond.

Let me, then, present my first thought for the evening, which is that this rarely happens. As you know, I asked that in preparation for this lecture you each read Joseph A. Schumpeter's *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy,* and Lionel Trilling's *The Middle of the Journey.* I will estimate that one in ten of you has done this and that another tenth, wishing it had, imagines it has.

A show of hands indicates that the hypothesis is confirmed.

Now to the main work of the evening. Yom Kippur was over at sundown. It is in this spirit that I address you. The sins of the past are shrived, and we begin anew. And yet the past remains with us as knowledge of the future. There will be sins enough to atone for when the cycle comes round once more. There is not much in human experience that any longer appears to us as uniquely human. Those of you going into science will spend a good share of your time extrapolating the behavior of rats into that of people. Still, a sense of what will come, especially that death will come, would seem to be singular in our species.

A sense of what is coming is the central experience to be had from both Schumpeter's and Trilling's books. There is a temptation to describe this as an intellectual experience in the case of the economics text, and an aesthetic one in the case of the novel; but these are uncertain categories. Your education at Harvard, as at any such institution, will divide up intellectual life and lead you to assume that there are profoundly different ways of knowing, and perhaps there are; and yet I would not settle too quickly into that convention. It is enough to see that here are two modes of anticipation, each analytic, each rigorous, each having a claim to being considered a possible instance of social theory with true predictive qualities. Schumpeter, the economist, is absorbed with the complex impact of technology on thought; Trilling's concerns move in rather the opposite direction, as might be expected of a literary critic. But in the end each evolves a singular vision that partakes of many disciplines.

I have asked you to read Schumpeter and Trilling because you are living in the future about which they wrote. No two men, to my thinking, have done this so well as they; but you need not share this view in order to agree that they did what they set out to do well enough for the two books to be taken as benchmarks respecting a past which has flowed into the present.

Each book is set in the late 1930's in America. (If we are to discuss them together, we will find ourselves alternating between the vocabularies of science and literature, doing some injustice to both. But this we can claim to be a cost others have imposed on us; alternatively, a dilemma others have devised for us.) The 1930's is a period that matters to you, for it was the time when most of your senior professors were taught. (I think of the "period" as lasting into the mid-1950's.) It was the time in which your parents were taught, and so it has already pressed itself heavily upon you. But now you will encounter it as the climate in which the formative intellectual experiences of your college teachers took place, unavoidably influencing your own formation.

The fascination of that time goes beyond the inter-generational tie, for it was a period that was formative to the American political culture generally and reverberates down to this moment in much the relationship the 1920's has attained to the affective culture. Each era seems to go on repeating itself in however so attenuated a manner. And why ought they not? Those are the two decades in which the present world took shape.

DANIEL P. MOYNIHAN, who is professor of education at Harvard, served in the administrations of Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon. Among his books are *Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding* and *The Politics of a Guaranteed Income,* which Random House will publish early in 1973.

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The world into which Joseph Schumpeter was born ended just as those decades began. There is a sense of the *douceur de vivre* of the Austro-Hungarian empire that lent its own dimension to his detachment as a social scientist from the events and tendencies about which he later wrote. He made his way by many stages to Harvard and made a large impression when he finally arrived. I never knew him, but for someone hanging about Cambridge on the GI Bill during the 1940's it was impossible not to know of him. It was said he would tell his class that as a young man he had resolved to become three things: the world's greatest economist, the world's greatest lover, and the world's greatest horseman; but that as advancing age constricted the horizons of possibility, he was learning to accept the fact that he would not achieve his third ambition.

And yet he had: for our purposes. His book, which he described as "an effort to weld into a readable form the bulk of almost forty years' thought, observation, and research on the subject of socialism," is a work of analysis and passion on a level few can sustain; but it is more than that. It is the work of a man who has been around horses. I do not know this actually to have been true, but his stepfather is described in the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* as "a high-ranking officer in the Austro-Hungarian Empire," and so it ought to have been true. Schumpeter was not of the view that horses or riders are all alike. Dams counted and sires counted, training and daring counted, resolution counted, and a tenth of a second could make all the difference in life. How to explain the beginnings of capitalism? A simple matter for Schumpeter: the "supernormal intelligence and energy" of the early entrepreneurs brought success in nine cases out of ten. How to account for the appeal of socialism? Again, simple. Socialism, in scientistic guise, formulated "with unsurpassed force that feeling of being thwarted and ill-treated which is the auto-therapeutic attitude of the unsuccessful many. . . ."

(I would assume that many of you take exception to such views, and you have every right to do so. But if you think Schumpeter wholly wrong in such matters, let me offer you at the outset what could prove the best advice you will ever get at Harvard College. Stay away from race tracks.)

SCHUMPETER wrote both to praise Marx *and* to bury him. His purpose was to test the scientific validity of the great Marxist thesis which has been so central to 20th-century politics and thought. He praised Marx the sociologist and Marx the teacher, and was scarcely disrespectful of Marx the economist. Even so, he thought the Marxian scenario altogether wrong. Capitalism as the organizing principle of the economy and the underlying structure of the culture would not go through the stages Marx had predicted. There would be no immiserization of the masses, no wars of colonial expansion. And yet—and here we see the daring of the man, the exuberant intellectual elegance—he concluded that Marx was right about what in the end would happen, was indeed right "that a socialist society will inevitably emerge from an equally inevitable decomposition of capitalist society." This was his "paradoxical conclusion"—that "capitalism is being killed by its achievements."

He saw this as resulting from the interaction of two phenomena. First, the very success of capitalism would lessen the importance of the entrepreneur and lessen the perceived value of the one thing capitalism indubitably creates, which is material wealth. Those men of "supernormal intelligence and energy" would gradually be replaced by managers of only marginally greater competence than the managed. One recalls Herman Wouk's description of the navy in World War II: a system devised by geniuses to be run by morons. Further, as any good economist ought to have been able to foresee, there would come a period of diminishing utility of increased consumption *or* increased production. An economist would know this: a Schumpeter would know also that the phenomenon would first appear in the most affluent classes, thereby acquiring social prestige. Nowhere does he say so, but I choose to be confident that he quite foresaw the day when the children of the rich would go about in ragged dungarees and that on ceremonial occasions college students would bury automobiles, combining in a sense the aristocratical ways of the court of Marie Antoinette and the Kwakiutl Indians.

(Allow me, parenthetically, to note that Schumpeter was thinking in a very long time perspective. At the time he wrote it had been roughly two centuries from the period capitalism had got going; it could well be, he judged, two centuries more before it had quite disappeared. My own estimate would be a half-century from now, in part because the rate of increase in wealth has quite surpassed even Schumpeter's forecast; and he was most bullish for his time.)

The second of Schumpeter's master propositions is more subtle, and for me more difficult to follow. In essence he states that capitalism is rationalism. It began by challenging the right of kings and barons and popes and bishops to exist: it would end by challenging its *own* right to exist. I follow *this*, and I can see how the defense would be difficult. But Schumpeter goes further. He suggests that the capitalist assault on itself will come not just from a habit of mind, a tradition of contentiousness and innovation, but also from far more ominous impulses. He seems to argue that there is an innate contrariness in human nature—an irrational destructiveness—

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which, far from being quelled by rationalist conditioning, merely uses it as the most effective possible device by which to attain irrational ends. Here is the key passage:

> It is an error to believe that political attack arises primarily from grievance and that it can be turned by justification. Political criticism cannot be met effectively by rational argument. From the fact that the criticism of the capitalist order proceeds from a critical attitude of mind, i.e., from an attitude which spurns allegiance to extra-rational values, it does not follow that rational refutation will be accepted. Such refutation may tear the rational garb of attack but can never reach the extra-rational driving power that always lurks behind it. Capitalist rationality does not do away with sub- or super-rational impulses. It merely makes them get out of hand by removing the restraint of sacred or semi-sacred tradition. In a civilization that lacks the means and even the will to discipline and to guide them, they will revolt. And once they revolt, it matters little that, in a rationalist culture, their manifestations will in general be rationalized somehow. Just as the call for utilitarian credentials has never been addressed to kings, lords, and popes in a judicial frame of mind that would accept the possibility of a satisfactory answer, so capitalism stands its trial before judges who have the sentence of death in their pockets. They are going to pass it, whatever the defense they may hear; the only success victorious defense can possibly produce is a change in the indictment. Utilitarian reason is in any case weak as a prime mover of group action. In no case is it a match for the extra-rational determinants of conduct.

Now I do not fully understand this. Why is it that "Capitalist rationality does not do away with sub- or super-rational impulses"? Rather, what is the nature of these impulses, and what is the evidence for them? Hearsay, mostly, albeit impressive hearsay. One thinks of Robert Warshow's comment on the nihilism of the Marx Brothers, men who "spit on culture." They are popular among middle-class intellectuals, he writes, "because they express a blind and destructive disgust with society that the responsible man is compelled to suppress in himself."* This was written more than a quarter-century ago, but is surely as true of the present. Hardly a day goes by when one or another Marx Brothers movie is not being shown somewhere within a quarter-mile of Harvard Square. And this curious mixture was part also of the Greek experience. So there it is: something we see happening, even if such as I do not fully comprehend it.

I have suggested that any good man might have made these points. Schumpeter's glory lies in having identified the peculiar agent which capitalism would create for its own destruction, which is to say the intellectuals. (Of which, one could add, Marx himself was an exemplar; indeed, in his patronage of the manufacturer Engels, a prototype.) And why would capitalism do this? Here, there is just the least touch of melancholy in a not especially sentimental man. Capitalism would create a vast intellectual class because it believed in such a class, because it derived its own vitality from intellectual processes. And so capitalism would protect intellectuals, even as they shrieked of oppression and hurled anathemas at their protectors: "any attack on the intellectuals must run up against the private fortresses of bourgeois business which . . . will shelter the quarry." Capitalism, alone of social systems, would subsidize and reward its mortal enemies: bound by its own rationale to do so. Its morale would begin to be affected:

> Perhaps the most striking feature of the picture is the extent to which the bourgeoisie, besides educating its own enemies, allows itself to be educated by them. It absorbs the slogans of current radicalism and seems quite willing to undergo a process of conversion to a creed hostile to its very existence.

Schumpeter asked no quarter of life, and yet one is glad somehow that he died in 1950 and was not on hand two decades later when one of Harvard's most distinguished officers, an avowed and courageous opponent of the Vietnam war, collapsed in the midst of a particularly brutal political demonstration just as some scion of the upper-middle class was describing him on the bullhorn as a "running dog of imperialism."

I speak of melancholy because Schumpeter had a sense of what was being lost: first language, then something akin to liberty, for the collectivist society would ineluctably narrow the limits of what is permitted and what is encouraged:

> Radicals may insist that the masses are crying for salvation from intolerable sufferings and rattling their chains in darkness and despair, but of course there never was so much personal freedom of mind and body *for all*, never so much active sympathy with real and faked sufferings, never so much readiness to accept burdens, as there is in modern capitalist society; and whatever democracy there was, outside of peasant communities, developed historically in the wake of both modern and ancient capitalism.

To this assertion he adds an equally apt footnote:

> Even Marx, in whose time indictments of this kind were not anything like as absurd as they are today, evidently thought it desirable to strengthen his case by dwelling on conditions that even then were either past or visibly passing.

Schumpeter defined socialism as "conquest of

* Robert Warshow, *The Immediate Experience*, Doubleday, p. 50.

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private industry and trade by the state." He did not consider that this would have to be a precipitous sequence, nor yet that there need be a totalitarian outcome. He had no illusions about capitalism: "the civilization of inequality and of the family fortune." And yet this new state: how different a regime it would be from that of *Die Fledermaus* where Eisenstein, having insulted a government official, must go to jail for eight days, but can put it off just long enough to attend Prince Orlofsky's ball.

A quarter-century later there are some things Schumpeter appears to have got wrong, but in the main events have gone precisely as he foresaw. The power of private enterprise remains formidable, but its morale and its reputation in places where it matters are quite shattered. The conquest of the private sector by the public proceeds apace, abetted by the extraordinary dynamic of inflation, a point Schumpeter made in his address, "The March into Socialism," delivered at the end of 1949 just eight days before his death. Wage and price controls, he forecast, would return and would "play an importat part in the eventual conquest of the private-enterprise system by the bureaucracy."

WHAT a very different mind is Lionel Trilling's. The backgrounds of the two men are not all that different; their families part of that Central European stream from which have flowed the dominant intellectual forces of American life today. With the death of Edmund Wilson, Trilling will surely be deemed the first laureate of American literary critics. His study has been that of minds, not that of markets; his endeavor has been to assess the authenticity of ideas rather than their going rate. To do this, at a middle point in his own career, he turned (as did Wilson) to the novel itself and produced his only such work, *The Middle of the Journey*. It is a novel about the two great absolutist ideas of our time and the wan possibility of maintaining a distance from either. If the world is not made by God, it is made by man: what possible position can there be in the middle? Enough perhaps for most of us to huddle there, but not very comfortably in this time, and even less in the late 1930's when the demand for commitment was greater. Each of these positions has its protagonists. On the one hand, Gifford Maxim, a former Stalinist, apparently some kind of spy, who has broken with that belief and is undergoing a profound and passionate Christian conversion. He believes the Communist party will try to kill him, and his efforts to make this difficult by giving a public dimension to the fact that he is alive provide the structure of the narrative. Opposed, as near convinced Stalinists, are Arthur and Nancy Crooms, he a rising young professional who will join the New Deal but is spending the summer in Connecticut. In the middle, John Laskell, who is Lionel Trilling. One almost hesitates to note that Trilling was writing about one of the most dramatic personal, ideological encounters of American history: which hadn't happened yet. For in another sense it had happened. The ideas were there, and it was destined that men would prove their vehicles.

It is getting a bit hard to recall how dominant, then, were the ideas of the Left. In the era itself the fact was self-evident. Warshow begins his review, published originally in COMMENTARY, of the novel with this almost casual assertion:

> For most American intellectuals, the Communist movement of the 1930's was a crucial experience. In Europe, where the movement was at once more serious and more popular, it was still only one current in intellectual life; the Communists could never completely set the tone of thinking. . . . But in this country there was a time when virtually all intellectual vitality was derived in one way or another from the Communist party. If you were not somewhere within the party's wide orbit, then you were likely to be in the opposition, which meant that much of your thought and energy had to be devoted to maintaining yourself in opposition.*

The "Stalinist liberalism" of that time, he continued, was "not a point of view but a psychological and sociological phenomenon." It was specifically "an experience of the middle class," centered in New York, a middle class increasingly able to summer in Connecticut.

Events lead, as they ought to in a novel of ideas, which is also in ways a *roman à clef*, to an event, the death of a young girl brought about by the cruelty of her squalid lower-class—they would have used some such word, lumpen, perhaps—father. The protagonists must face the meaning of it. Nancy Crooms knows that something evil has occurred, but there is no place for evil in her universe. "You surely know," she says to Maxim, "why it isn't his fault." "Nancy means," her husband tries to help, "that social causes, environment, education or lack of education, economic pressure, the character-pattern imposed by society, in this case by a disorganized society, all go to explain and account for any given individual's actions."

No, says Maxim, the child has died; the man is bad; he is to blame. And it may be also that he is to be forgiven. He pronounces the final Christian verdict on the Communist:

> . . . You and I stand opposed. For you—no responsibility for the individual, but no forgiveness. For me—ultimate, absolute responsibility for the individual, but mercy. Absolute responsibility: it is the only way that men can keep their value, can be thought of as other than mere *things*. Those matters that Arthur speaks of—social causes, environment, education—do

* Ibid., p. 33.

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you think they really make a difference between one human soul and another? In the eyes of God are such differences of any meaning at all? Can you suppose that *they* condition His mercy? Does He hold a Doctor of Philosophy more responsible than a Master of Arts, or a high-school graduate more responsible than a man who has not finished the eighth grade? Or is His mercy less to one than another?

Laskell demurs:

> Is it really a question. . . ? I can't see it as a question, not really. An absolute freedom from responsibility—that much of a child none of us can be. An absolute responsibility—that much of a divine or metaphysical essence none of us is.

Pascal, responds Maxim, said all that long ago; but there is no longer a middle way. The Renaissance idea—the day for being human in that way—is over. "Gone. Done for. Finished." The Crooms and the Maxims had inherited the future, would jointly or separately impose order. It was Laskell's hunch that "the intellectual power" had gone from the Stalinists, and their power of drama also. He sensed that the Whittaker Chamberses would dominate. But he would not. Not he.

All this was long ago, and yet the process proceeds. You may not think this, and assuredly you are under no obligation to do so. And yet you had best satisfy yourself why it is you think otherwise, for surely a different view would belie appearances. The appearances are that of a steady progression in the direction Schumpeter and Trilling, each in his own mode of anticipation, saw as ineluctable.

The great transformation, to my mind, although this may merely be the preoccupation of a political scientist, has been in the language and the personnel of politics. Stalinism brought the middle-class intellectual into American politics, and American politics is vastly changed for it. Please note that I did not use the term Communism. In itself a vigorous American Communist party need have done no harm and might possibly have done some good. But in the Stalinist form it was profoundly corrupting, for its fundamental thrust from the time of the Popular Front—that is to say the mid-1930's—was to deny that it itself existed and to make itself felt through the infiltration and manipulation of other popular movements. Deception on a massive scale became policy, while extraordinary numbers of extraordinary people submitted to *this* life of the mind. The language of politics has never recovered, and confidence in politics has concomitantly declined. This happened not least because the popular reaction to these events has been led, or symbolized, by men who have only dimly grasped what really was at stake and have been easily discredited in the minds of the newer cohorts of middle-class activists coming along. Contrary to John Laskell's hunch, the point of view Gifford Maxim stood for has acquired but few advocates and less prestige, not least because so many of its ablest advocates have been, as Maxim was, converts whose conversion led them to acknowledge what all their former colleagues denied, so that they have seemed quirky at best and paranoiacal at worst. There have been times when the tiny and not very hopeful Socialist party has seemed the sole repository of both understanding and honesty in American politics. I cite you the Hebrew; *hamayvin yavin,* those who understand, understand.

Institutions have changed almost beyond recall in this process, and none so drastically as institutions like Harvard which was, for all its distinction, rather a sleepy and parochial place in the 1930's. It knew little of the Croomses; nothing of the Maxims. Indeed, there is a sense in which it knew little of intellectuals as Schumpeter understood the term, a calling that extended to that of propagandist and included that of journalist. Harvard was a place for the pursuit and the transmission of knowledge. There were probably few persons on the faculty who would have even thought of themselves as "intellectuals." They were scholars and might well have been offended by the other term. All that has changed in response to pressures certainly no individual can be held accountable for, and which few seem able to resist. That, perhaps, exaggerates. The *via media* that Laskell sought to follow and Maxim said was finished is not yet finished in Cambridge. It is our predominant belief, but no longer our most confident one. Professor Adam Ulam, in his compelling and necessary new book, *The Fall of the American University,* writes that for all the outward calm, "the politicization and bureaucratization of the American university have grown apace." Harvard, Professor James Q. Wilson wrote last spring,* is no longer as liberal an institution as it once was. There are ideas that are not tolerated here, knowledge that is not taught. But that was predictable, wasn't it?

There are, of course, cycles in this long-term trend, and we may well be on a downward slope at the moment. Harvard became greatly involved with government in the early 1960's and came out of the experience hurt and uncomprehending. Government had seemed such great fun; but it turned out not to be fun at all, but bloody and tragic. There has been a withdrawal. The university has given fifteen honorary degrees to members of the Kennedy administration,† but only one to a Johnson man and only one other to a Nixon man, and both of these Ivy Leaguers seen as somewhat out of place in their respective

* "Liberalism versus Liberal Education," COMMENTARY, June 1972.

† Some of the fifteen served in earlier administrations.

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administrations. Harvard has been through, to put it gently, a chastening experience of the real world and real power.

Then, in the late 1960's, Harvard became greatly involved with the rhetoric and tactics of opposing government, in this case from a posture of the Left. (In both instances, of course, only a small element of the community has been involved; but that element nonetheless defined the period.) This movement, too, is somewhat recessive at the moment; but it persists, even as the involvement with government persists.

A CCNY man may perhaps be forgiven the impression that Harvard has not been equal to the strains that have been imposed on it by these movements, which Trilling described and Schumpeter anticipated, of the political culture into the scholarly community. Attack from *within* is wholly new to its experience and brings forth few of the brave and honorable qualities that so characterized the university's response to attack from *without* in the 1950's. One has the sense of a somewhat overbred community that had the instinct to bring in new blood, but did not understand that in doing so it would bring in also new conditions of argument, and resentment of its very existence. In the face of ideas that intend nothing less than the destruction of what Harvard has stood for, Harvard seems to have almost no defense save good manners. Now I do not underestimate the power of the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant being well-behaved. Scenes from Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* come quickly to mind. Yet this is a form of passive defense more appropriate to the bondholder than to the guardians of a great university tradition. The fact, as I see it, is that the ideological initiative at Harvard has been conceded to the extremists. Many ignore their views, but few contest them. An occasional Social Democrat, wandered in from CCNY, rejoins the battle of his youth; but on balance the Brahmin intellectual tradition stands uncomprehending, and not a little fearful before a still resolute politics of organized deception and violence which is a legacy of the Stalinist era in American intellectual life. There has been of late a diminution of energy which Professor Ulam notes, but none of purpose. Mass assault has given way to "salami tactics": one professor at a time rather than one building at a time. But the institution remains trapped in its own decency, its moral authority gradually eroding, such that in the end all that will be left will be the good manners, and then it will not any longer matter.

But then there is an altogether new and quite uncertain development which takes place this week. A new class has arrived. You. It is now your university, also. It will impart some of its qualities to you, and partake of some of yours. I have dealt tonight with the foreknowledge of other men, and it would be inappropriate to enter the field myself. And yet, I would wish you to know that you are well spoken of and genuinely welcome.

Postscript

Most of the many students who attended the freshman lecture this year were handed literature as they entered Sanders Theater by representatives of three groups, the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the Radcliffe-Harvard New American Movement (NAM), and the Revolutionary Communist Youth (RCY). The material was familiar enough, stressing especially that aching need for alliance with the working class which upper-middle-class radicals continue to exhibit. (One learns in the SDS pamphlet that "Harvard students under President Lowell were given course credit for breaking unions in Massachusetts by scabbing on workers' strikes. But if we really want to change things, workers must be our strongest allies.") Dean Bundy, Professors Kissinger and Huntington come in for the usual epithets. Somewhat new, however, is the identification of a "Cambridge Circle" made up of a number of professors, myself included, who are alleged to be leading an "attack on equality." It is surely "no accident" that almost without exception the specific charges leveled against the "Cambridge Circle" are lies. That is to say they are not distortions, or misreadings, but true and genuine lies. In most instances they represent the individual as holding an opinion exactly opposite of that which he does hold. This has nothing to do with the correctness or incorrectness, or attractiveness, or whatever, of the views the individuals do hold or those they are alleged to hold. It is merely that there has been a complete inversion of reality. I believe this to be a distinguishing quality of the Stalinoid mindset.

In fairness to the Revolutionary Communist Youth, it should be said that, unlike their forebears of the Popular Front period, they sail under their own colors. They state:

> The Revolutionary Communist Youth (RCY) is the youth section of the Spartacist League, which uniquely represents the nucleus of the vanguard party in the U.S. The RCY originated in 1969 as the Revolutionary Marxist Caucus, a Left oppositional grouping in SDS which fought for Marxist clarity against both the anarcho-Maoism of the Rudd-Weatherman wing and the crude social-workerism of Progressive Labor. . . . The RCY seeks to develop young radicals into lifetime communist militants, and to build a socialist youth organization which can intervene in all social struggles with a revolutionary program based on the politics of Marx, Lenin, and Trotsky.

It is doubtless perverse to do so, but I happen to find that an honorable statement of purpose.

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On the Soviet Departure from Egypt

Walter Laqueur

IT SHOULD have been obvious ever since the late 50's, when the Soviet Union became the dominant power in the Arab world, that sooner or later its relationship with the Arabs would become fraught with tension, discord, and even open conflict. At the time, it is true, some Western observers regarded the Soviet breakthrough in the Middle East as a disaster for the West of unprecedented dimension; the Soviets for their part may have fondly harbored the same idea. But the illusion, if such it was, should have been dispelled once and for all by the events of this past year. The Russians are now much more likely to agree with George F. Kennan's recent assessment: "Given the passionate, volatile, and intensely self-centered disposition of the Arabs, their friendship could be in many instances hardly less onerous than their hostility."*

I do not mean to imply that 1972 has been a year of unmitigated catastrophe for the Russians in the Middle East. Twenty thousand of them had to leave Egypt, but the Soviet position elsewhere in the Arab world has become stronger. On the other hand, it is possible that the Russians will one day return to Egypt, while it is almost certain that trouble will eventually erupt with Iraq and Syria. What all this signifies is the necessity, which the Soviets must have recognized for some time, of establishing new priorities in their Middle Eastern policy; these new priorities deserve close scrutiny not only insofar as they concern Soviet ties with the Arab world but because they are bound to affect relations with the United States—as well, of course, as the Arab-Israeli conflict itself.

AT THE end of September of this year, on the second anniversary of the death of Egypt's President Nasser, a long article appeared in *Pravda* celebrating the memory of this great son of the Egyptian people. Though extravagant, the praise was not really misdirected, for it was under Nasser's rule that the Soviet Union came to replace the Western countries as the dominant power in Egypt. Nasser's regime—"fascist, bloody"—had been violently denounced at first by Communists both in Egypt and abroad, but within two years of his accession to power, the Soviet attitude had changed radically. Nasser was aiming high, he needed big-power support (which he was unlikely to get from the West) and, above all, he was willing to make a return on any assistance he received. True, Nasser was a nationalist and a practicing Moslem, but the Soviets assumed, correctly as it soon emerged, that these did not constitute insurmountable obstacles to cooperation. Given patience, tact, and persistence, the logic of events (and of his own ambitions) would compel Nasser to pursue a pro-Soviet line in foreign affairs and to carry out far-reaching ("progressive") changes in domestic policy.

Nevertheless, neither the Soviet Union nor Nasser himself could have possibly imagined in 1955, when the first arms deal between the two countries was signed, how deeply both sides would eventually become involved in their common enterprise. That first medium-sized arms deal—of about $80 million—grew into a multi-billion dollar investment, and the small Soviet diplomatic colony in Cairo mushroomed into a force of some twenty-thousand military experts and advisers, not to mention their wives, children, dentists, hairdressers, and numerous other hangers-on. Permanent military bases were soon established on Egyptian soil, and the Soviet Union participated in several major industrial projects, most spectacular among them the Aswan dam. To be sure, in its initial years the Moscow-Cairo alliance had its ups and downs, and even its bitter quarrels, but these gradually ceased as Nasser came to be known as the Soviets' most promising "national democrat." He was certainly their most trustworthy client, and in many ways their most fortunate one too: Nkrumah, Sukarno, Ben Bella, and other heroes of national-liberation move-

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* "After the Cold War: American Foreign Policy in the 1970's," *Foreign Affairs*, October 1972.

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ments all disappeared, but Nasser, despite misfortunes and setbacks in the Arab world, stayed on, seemingly indestructible.

The Six-Day War marked a milestone in Soviet-Egyptian relations. It dramatically deepened Egypt's dependency on the Soviet Union, because of the need to replace quickly all the military materiel which had been lost or destroyed, and it ultimately led to the far-reaching Soviet decision, taken in the early months of 1970, to participate directly in the Egyptian military effort. Late in 1969 Egypt had stepped up the war of attrition on the Suez Canal, and Israel had retaliated by bombing targets deep inside Egypt in January and February 1970. (Later there were second thoughts in Israel about the wisdom of these deep-penetration raids.) Upon Nasser's urgent request, a massive missile defense system, consisting of SAM-2's and SAM-3's, was installed, manned by Soviet personnel. Soviet pilots flew advanced aircraft on combat missions from fifteen Soviet airfields inside Egypt.

By the time of Nasser's death in September 1970, the Soviet Union had made a political, military, and economic investment in Egypt that was without parallel outside the Warsaw-Pact countries. From the Egyptian point of view, however, the balance sheet after fifteen years of Soviet aid must surely have appeared negative. Economically the country was heavily in debt. It was politically far less independent than it had been in 1955, and in addition had suffered a stunning military defeat, losing vast territories which—despite Soviet help—it was nowhere near recovering. The patent dissatisfaction of the Egyptians with the existing state of affairs should have been enough in itself to fill Soviet leaders with misgivings about the future course of their relations with Egypt, and Moscow's longstanding inability to establish control over various levers of power in Egypt like the secret police, the army command, the Arab Socialist Union, and the propaganda apparatus, could only have buttressed these misgivings. Although a few Communists were in key positions, and there was even a "Russian party" in Cairo, its ideology and political orientation could not be relied upon. Basically the Soviets had been dependent on the presence of one man, Nasser.

The decisive political role during the period immediately after Nasser's death was played by the men of Nasser's inner circle, a group of officials linked to one another by ties of family or friendship, or mutually beholden in other ways. Leading members of this group were Ali Sabri (the head of the "Russian party"), Mohammed Fayek (Minister of Information), Sami Sharaf (Minister for Presidential Affairs), Mahmud Fawzi (Minister of Defense), Sharawi Guma (Minister of Interior), as well as several secret-service chiefs (Ahmad Kamel, Amin Huweidi, Fathi Deeb), and some officials of the state party including Abdel Muhsin Abul Nur. Since all the members of this group were subsequently arrested and brought to trial for plotting to overthrow the government, and since the proceedings of the trial have been published,* it is possible to retrace fairly accurately the steps taken by them in the search for a front man to act as President in the early weeks after Nasser's death. Right from the beginning, it appears, Anwar Sadat was the favored candidate: a "stupid" man, he was considered easily manipulable. Other names were discussed and dismissed. The group had great respect for Ali Sabri, but "he was hated by the masses." They objected to Zakariya Mohieddin because "he was a strong personality and it would be very difficult to control him." Hussein Shafei, Nasser's old friend and comrade-in-arms, was thought to be not equal to the job. Finally, only Sadat remained, his election all the more convenient since he was already Vice President of the Republic.

IT TOOK a mere six months for the Egyptian "Mafia," as its critics called the inner circle, to discover that Sadat was not at all so easy to manipulate; on the contrary, he was "cagey, unpredictable, and wished to follow his own line in domestic matters and external policies." The group's brief against Sadat focused on two matters in particular: first, the proposed federation with Libya and Syria—which, the members insisted, had to gain the consent of the peoples concerned and which they maintained would be meaningless anyway without the participation of the Sudan. Secondly, according to the evidence given later by Ahmad Kamel, chief of intelligence, the group wanted to resume the war against Israel and to implicate the Soviet Union in the actual fighting: "they [the Russians] could not possibly abandon the Egyptians to their fate. Partial victory would confirm the group in power, defeat would be blamed on Sadat." (These were not matters of principle as far as the conspirators were concerned; they would have been willing, if necessary, to take exactly the opposite line, for as Ahmad Kamel said, "the principal aim for them was to remain in control of authority. . . .")

The subsequent course of the plot is fascinating material for the student of conspiracies, but of limited interest here. As is well known, it failed utterly, partly because too many persons and factions were involved and also because the conspirators disagreed among themselves on many issues. On May 13, 1971, the members of the group handed in their collective resignation; this was to be in preparation for a coup de-

* The testimony was published in the Beirut daily, *Al Nahar*, in September 1971; it has been summarized and analyzed in a valuable article by P.J. Vatikiotis, "Egypt's Politics of Conspiracy," in *Survey*, Spring 1972, pp. 83-99.

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signed to remove Sadat, yet it was a curiously passive approach and one that involved many risks. The *Voice of the Arabs*, temporarily in the group's hands, broadcast news of the resignations, and a few stage-managed demonstrations followed. But no public outcry was heard, no overwhelming demand that the men be restored to office. Sadat weathered the storm with surprising ease. The men were arrested, subsequently brought to trial, and sentenced to long prison terms. No one in Egypt, with the exception of a few of the "Mafia's" fellow-travelers, was sad to see it go. A new government under Aziz Sidqi was appointed, and the Arab Socialist Union, which had been the conspirators' main bulwark, underwent a massive purge.

The events of May 1971 left Sadat with far greater freedom of movement, but still insecure in his position. He had decapitated the old intelligence service and weakened other pillars of the regime, but had no new power base with which to replace them. He enjoyed the support of a few friends and well-wishers, and since the conspirators were so thoroughly disliked, he more or less automatically received some public credit for their ouster. But that was all.

As for the Soviets, they must have watched the course of events with growing dismay. Many Western commentators said at the time that the May purges were directed specifically against the leaders of the "Russian party," but this was an exaggeration. In all probability, the plotters had acted on their own; there is no evidence of their having informed Moscow of their intentions beforehand, and it is unlikely that the Russians would have given their blessing to such an amateurish enterprise. The Egyptian Communists were certainly not involved; on the contrary, one of them was coopted into the government by Sadat after the coup failed. A leading Communist literary figure, Abder Rahman el Sharqawi, wrote that "they [the Mafia] had established a kingdom of vampires." Even the Soviet press eventually condemned the conspirators.

Still, in the final analysis, though the Russians distrusted all Egyptians, they distrusted some more than others. The fact is they had established a working relationship with Nasser and his inner circle, whereas Sadat was unpredictable and the possibility even existed of his making a deal with the United States. President Podgorny was therefore dispatched to Cairo with unseemly haste within two weeks of the attempted coup. He returned to Moscow with Sadat's signature on a fifteen-year "Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation." The treaty, which was given much publicity at the time, pledged Soviet support for the UAR in its struggle to become a socialist society, and bound each of the two parties not to enter any alliance or take any action directed against the other party or to conclude any other international agreement at variance with the terms of the treaty.

Taken at face value, the treaty seemed to represent a grave setback for Egypt because its stipulations were so patently one-sided and appeared to reflect a growing dependence on the Soviet Union. No one in his right mind would have assumed that the Russians would ever consult Sadat on vital questions of foreign policy and defense. The only possible justification for the treaty from the Egyptian point of view was the secret military clauses, which (as Sadat said in his speech before the National Assembly on June 2, 1971) "added new guarantees which had not been defined previously." Yet it is equally doubtful whether Sadat himself ever intended to live up to the conditions of the treaty. Egypt, after all, was not a member state of the Warsaw Pact, it had no common border with the Soviet Union or any of its allies, and the Brezhnev doctrine of intervention simply would not be made to apply to it. In fact, it was Sadat who in Moscow's view was being the unreasonable one: he virtually expected the Soviet Union to declare war on Israel, and then, following victory over the Jewish state, to give up its bases in Egypt.

PODGORNY's delegation left Cairo on May 8, 1971; less than two months later Soviet-Egyptian friendship was put to a severe test as a result of the Communist coup in the Sudan. In February the Sudanese dictator, General Gafaar al-Nimeiry, had announced his intention to "crush" the local Communists; they responded with acts of open defiance and he countered, in mid-March, by removing some sixty Communists from key positions in the army, the police, and the state apparatus. The Communists then staged a coup on July 19, but within three days Nimeiry was back in power. The military plotters, as well as many leading Communists, including the secretary-general of the party, were executed. *Pravda* denounced the "mass-scale bloody reign of terror" in the Sudan, while Nimeiry proceeded to expel the Bulgarian ambassador as well as a Soviet counselor and to describe relations with the Soviet Union as "extremely bad." Subsequently it transpired that, as in Egypt, Soviet leaders had not been informed, let alone consulted, about the intended coup—perhaps because the conspirators feared they would veto it.

While Moscow was bitterly denouncing the repression in Sudan, Presidents Sadat of Egypt and Khadafi of Libya were doing their best to help Nimeiry in his campaign to stamp out Communist influence. In a speech delivered in Cairo on July 24, 1971, Sadat said that the newly formed Arab federation had been born with teeth "which in the Sudan were very sharp indeed." Orders were given in Cairo for the immediate return of a Sudanese brigade from Suez to

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Khartoum to help Nimeiry in his counter-coup.

The next act in the unfolding tragicomedy opened during Sadat's visit to Moscow in mid-October 1971. This was to be the first of three visits within seven months. Western observers noted at the time that Sadat had apparently moved closer to the Soviet line; in so many words he denounced anti-Communist moves in the Arab world as "prejudicing the peoples' urge for liberation." The Soviet Union on the other hand gave qualified support to the new federation of Egypt, Libya, and Syria, provided, of course, that it became "a bulwark of unity of all truly progressive forces." According to the Moscow communiqué, Sadat's talks with Brezhnev, Podgorny, and Kosygin were conducted in a spirt of "frankness and cordiality"—but in fact there was more double-talk than ever before. The Soviet leaders assumed, quite rightly, that they might as well give their blessing to the new federation since it was still-born anyway. Sadat, for his part, could safely issue a routine condemnation of anti-Sovietism since the pro-Communist forces at home and in the Sudan no longer constituted a danger. Soviet-Egyptian relations had turned into a meaningless, even farcical, exchange of declarations.

SADAT returned to Moscow in the first week of February 1972. Once more there were the ritual incantations—the meeting was an "outstanding success," "an important turning point," friendship between the two countries was "immortal"—yet according to all the evidence it was the worst conference so far. Sadat was now under great pressure at home; student riots in January had underlined the shakiness of his regime. The India-Pakistan war had caused apprehension in Cairo, partly because the Soviet Union had openly taken sides against a Moslem country, partly because of the temporary transfer of Soviet war materiel from Egypt to the subcontinent. If Sadat had hoped for a military-political escalation during the winter, the war in India clearly upset his timetable. Above all, his much vaunted "year of decision" with Israel had come and gone and had become the subject of many bitter jokes in Egypt and the other Arab countries.

What Sadat really wanted now were offensive weapons: medium- or long-range ground-to-ground missiles, and Mig-23's, the most advanced Soviet plane. The Soviets ignored these requests for as long as they could, then finally told the Egyptians as diplomatically as possible that their army was simply not good enough to win a war against Israel, despite the fact that the Soviet Union had invested billions of dollars in Egypt's rearmament. In these circumstances a few *Foxbats* (the NATO designation for Mig-23's) or missiles would not make much difference. In addition, quite apart from the military assessment of the situation, there were weighty political considerations behind Moscow's coolness to the new Egyptian request: by February 1972 definite progress had been achieved in the talks with Washington, and no one in Moscow intended to see this progress undermined by a war in the Middle East.

All this should have been clear to the Egyptians long before; perhaps it was—but it became a topic of open discussion only after Sadat's return from Moscow, when it was made the subject of a seminar held in Cairo in the late spring and also of a long feature article in *Al Ahram* written by Mohammed Hassanein Heykal.* Heykal cited no fewer than ten reasons that underlay, as he believed, the mistaken Soviet policy (or, as he called it, the "crime") of "no peace and no war," and produced ten counter-arguments designed to show how the policy would be self-defeating from the Soviets' own point of view, and inferior to a policy of outright warfare. Characteristically, he ignored the most basic question involved in his own position, namely, what would happen to Soviet interests in the Arab world after the expected victory over Israel had been achieved. Nor did he make it clear exactly what, in the event, the Egyptians really wanted from Moscow: a few more planes and missiles—or the active participation of Soviet divisions and units of the Soviet Mediterranean fleet?

The last stage before the July crisis was reached when Sadat invited himself to Moscow for yet a third time (April 1972). The situation as he saw it was more precarious than ever. President Nixon was due to meet soon with the Soviet leaders; as far as Cairo was concerned nothing good could possibly come from their talks. Mrs. Meir had been invited to Bucharest—another ill omen. And, lastly, Iraq, Egypt's main rival and antagonist in the Arab world, was about to sign a treaty with Moscow. Sadat's own speeches at home had meanwhile become progressively more violent. On the birthday of the Prophet, he solemnly announced another deadline for victory: "When we celebrate the birthday of Mohammed next, not only Sinai but Jerusalem too will be liberated, and the Israelis reduced to the abasement and submissiveness

* Heykal, adviser and confidant to Nasser, has been suspected by the Russians (wrongly it would appear) of being a mainstay of the pro-Western party in Cairo. His reputation as the most accomplished journalist in the Arab world seems equally undeserved. Basically, Heykal has published the same three or four articles over and over again for the last twenty years, countless (and often endless) variations on the same theme. What distinguishes Heykal is his apparent ability to move slightly beyond the accepted limits of what can be said without offending the censors—hence, the impression he gives of originality and outspokenness. Heykal has been a fairly accurate barometer of the political climate in Cairo, not an original or consistent political thinker; as a historical source, his "revelations" have to be read with the greatest of care.

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decreed for them." In Moscow Sadat met twice with Brezhnev and received Soviet approval to go to war—if he really wanted to. This was a new departure for the Soviets, but was actually less momentous than it appeared. Egypt clearly was not ready for war. After his return Sadat admitted there had been some differences with the Russians, but what did it matter? Agreement had been reached on certain "important measures" to strengthen military cooperation.

During May and June news spread of a further deterioration in Soviet-Egyptian relations, but there is nothing to suggest that Sadat wanted a dramatic showdown with the Russians at this time. On the contrary, he went out of his way during a speech to denounce anti-Soviet elements inside Egypt. Marshal Grechko revisited Cairo in May, bringing with him a few Mig-23's. According to a statement by Colonel Khadafi not published in Cairo, "Grechko left nothing behind but public optimism and falsely raised hopes."

On the events of June and July there is a semi-official version as well as several others. Sadat himself says he finally lost all hope of effective Soviet support in late June as the Russians continued to ignore his demand for offensive weapons. On July 9, President Hafez al Asad of Syria arrived in Cairo quite unexpectedly in an attempt to mediate between Egypt and the Soviet Union. Sadat allegedly told him to mind his own business (Asad had just signed a military pact with the Russians). According to his version, Sadat was further irritated by Soviet statements, made in talks with Syrian Communist leaders in Moscow, that the Arabs would be well advised not to go to war with Israel since there could be few doubts about the outcome. On July 13, Prime Minister Aziz Sidqi and Foreign Minister Murad Ghaleb flew to Moscow. They were scheduled to stay for three days but returned after only one. Again the Soviets issued an official communiqué saying that the Arabs could use "all means at their disposal" to recover the lost territories. The day after Sidqi's return the exodus of Soviet military personnel began. On July 18 Sadat delivered a speech making the expulsion order a matter of public record.

THAT Sadat had for some time been feeling more than a little frustrated is beyond doubt. By his bombast and his foolish promises and timetables he had maneuvered himself into an impossible position. To survive politically he needed a more or less convincing explanation for the fact that 1971 had not been the "year of decision" he had promised—and that 1972 was not likely to be either. The most obvious explanation lay at hand: the Russians had let him down. But this is only part of the story. There is reason to believe he was egged on in his decision by Colonel Khadafi, who had never made a secret of his feelings about the Russians. Khadafi, a manic-depressive, had just survived an attempt by some of his fellow officers to remove him from the political scene, and was now at his most aggressive. Above all, Sadat seems to have been confronted by an ultimatum from his leading army officers, who for some time had wanted to limit Soviet interference in Egyptian military affairs. (The fact that the Russians had asked for the removal of War Minister Sadeq had not exactly disposed Sadeq in their favor.*) A great many stories were circulating in Cairo concerning the arrogant behavior of the Soviet advisers toward the Egyptian military; there was even a report, perhaps apocryphal, that Sadat himself no longer had access to Soviet bases on Egyptian soil. The stories may well have been exaggerated, but what mattered was that the Russians were thoroughly disliked, and that the dislike was mutual. The army command, in brief, had reasons of its own for wanting to get rid of the Russians.†

It must be said that the Russians reacted with utter calm to the sudden ouster demand. Their behavior in fact seemed to bear out what Sadat had told Cyrus Sulzberger the winter before: that the Soviets were not at all interested in staying in Egypt, that they had repeatedly expressed the wish to leave, and that they remained only because Sadat insisted. But this, to put it mildly, was not the whole truth; the Soviets undoubtedly were not eager to man the Suez defense line against Israel, but the naval bases and the airfields were another matter altogether. Still, they had no alternative but to react calmly. A military takeover of Egypt was out of the question, and even a propaganda campaign of recrimination must have seemed rather pointless. The Soviet press quite sensibly described the troop withdrawals as the natural end of a mission which had been successfully completed: the rebuilding of the Egyptian army. In his speech of July 18, Sadat asserted that the expulsion would in no way affect Soviet-Egyptian friendship and he thanked the Russians for all their help. Mohammed Heykal performed his usual tightrope act, exhorting Sadat to safeguard friendship with the Soviets, "for which there is no substitute," while at the same time disclosing that five planes flown by Soviet pilots had been shot down the previous winter by the Israelis in less than a minute's time. Heykal, and others, asked that serious talks be initiated with Moscow to put the relationship between the two countries on a

* The Russians reportedly also requested the removal of Said Marei, the Secretary General of the Socialist Union, who had been instrumental in purging the pro-Soviet elements in the state party.

† Officially there were no Soviet bases, only "facilities," including the major airfields at Mansura, Jiyanklis, Inchas, Cairo West, Beni Suef, Aswan, and some others, and the naval bases at Mersa Matruh, Alexandria, and Port Said.

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new basis. But this was about the last thing the Russians wanted—certainly not in public.

During the following weeks there were hints of peace meetings, notes were exchanged, ambassadors were withdrawn and then restored, and a new cabinet was appointed in Cairo. In a speech in mid-August Sadat complained that he had been exposed to Soviet pressure to capitulate to Israel, and that the Soviets had imposed a virtual arms embargo, intended to drive Egypt to despair. A letter from Brezhnev he had received was totally unacceptable in both form and content. But *(Inshallah)* Egypt would receive the arms it needed for the blow against Israel. By late September, following additional exchanges and the efforts of half a dozen mediators from various countries, Sadat said that he felt a little happier about relations between the two countries. As a result, it was decided to dispatch the Egyptian prime minister for further talks in Moscow. The Russians, not surprisingly, made their continued support dependent on the satisfaction of some rather tough demands, and Sadat, after all the blustering of the hot summer months, acquiesced without a struggle: Sadeq, his war minister, was out, and so were the commander of the Egyptian navy and other high-ranking officers. Soon thereafter, several hundred Soviet military advisers returned to Egypt to man the air defenses along the Suez Canal and around Cairo.

President Sadat's position is now weaker than it has ever been before; the military men who had backed him are gone and it is by no means certain he can trust their successors. His eventual fall from power now seems only a question of time. The Russians would surely prefer someone more trustworthy, and as for the military, sooner or later a high-ranking officer will come along enterprising (and foolish) enough to aspire to Sadat's succession.

BEFORE Nasser's death I wrote: "Only the future will show whether the trend to Nasser's policy, the ever-growing dependence on the Soviet Union, is reversible. It is probably premature to speak about a 'point of no return.' It still depends in the last resort on the scale of priorities of Egypt's leaders. Those to whom the heavy burden of succession will one day pass are not to be envied."* Three years later there is still a question as to the priorities of Egypt's leaders, but *Soviet* priorities—which are the more decisive in the situation—seem to have undergone a significant shift. Egypt under Nasser, despite the many setbacks it suffered, was the leading country in the Arab world; it figured highly in Soviet planning as a springboard to the Middle East and North Africa and ultimately as a gate to the Indian Ocean. Egypt under Sadat, however, has been another affair altogether; no longer the leading country in the Arab world, it no longer warrants preferential treatment by Moscow. In fact, the Soviet Union had decided to diversify its investments in the Arab world well before the summer of 1972; the exodus from Egypt, permanent or not, has from that point of view only hastened a process that might otherwise have taken a little longer but that was inexorable.

While Egypt seems to have been downgraded in the scale of Soviet priorities, relations with Syria and Iraq now figure very prominently. Iraq has been ruled for the last five years by more or less the same people, the Ba'ath party. This was originally a group of army officers closely knit by family ties and common origin. More recently, owing to the initiative of Hussein Sadham al Takriti, Iraq's strong man who is both deputy president of the party and head of the Revolutionary Command Council, the military leadership has been infiltrated and partly outmaneuvered by a civilian group. It remains to be seen whether this development will have lasting results; it certainly has not led to greater freedom for the Iraqis. The Ba'ath reign of terror in Iraq is unrivaled in the Arab world (with the possible exception of South Yemen); Sadat's Egypt is a haven of democracy by comparison. Yet the fact that the regime is hated and feared inside Iraq, and despised and isolated in the Arab world, has worked in Russia's favor; for the Iraqi Ba'ath, more than any other group of Arab leaders, needs the protection of a great power. As in Syria, two Communists are members of the government, but the Communists control neither the secret police nor the army, and these are, of course, the real levers of power.

The Soviet Union signed a treaty of friendship with Iraq in April 1972 and has concluded several other specific military and political agreements. The advantages of gaining a firm foothold in Iraq are immense. A well-informed author wrote even before the break with Egypt:

> The agreement may well mark a significant shift of emphasis in Russian policy, away from an exclusive concern with and heavy dependence upon Egypt, in the hope of gaining a new center of power and influence in the Middle East that is less closely involved with the more or less permanent dangers and entanglements of the Arab-Israeli confrontation. . . . What the Kremlin has gained is a secure foothold in the Gulf from which to make her naval presence felt—if necessary on a continuous basis.†

Iraq's geographical position has much to recommend it; it flanks Turkey and Iran, and borders on Syria, Jordan, and the Arabian peninsula. It is a springboard for the oil-rich Persian Gulf area, including the various tiny sheikhdoms

* *The Struggle for the Middle East* (1969), p. 84.

† M. Burrell, *The Persian Gulf*, Washington Papers, No. 1, 1972, p. 77.

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and emirates which possess a substantial part of the world's oil reserves. In the future, the Soviet Union will be much better placed to extend aid to the "Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Occupied Arab Gulf," and to combat Chinese influence among these rebels as well as in South Yemen. Above all, Iraq means oil; the North Rumaila oilfields which are now exploited by a Soviet consortium will produce twenty-million tons by 1975—a modest figure by present-day standards but one which promises to grow in time.

The new alliance with Iraq does involve certain dangers for the Soviet Union, but they do not outweigh the gains. One is the immense unpopularity of Iraq in the Arab world, another the state of sub-acute warfare between that country and Iran. In the past the Soviet Union has pursued a more or less even-handed policy as between Iran and Iraq; this will become more and more difficult to maintain. The Iraqi Kurds, persecuted by the Baghdad government, looked in the past to Moscow as a potential protector, but they too will be unlikely to receive much sympathy from the Soviet Union in the future. Lastly, the Iraqi economy is in sad shape; despite substantial oil revenues, successive governments have shown greater than average administrative incompetence and economic development has hardly been spectacular—much in contrast to Iran. The Soviet Union, having already invested some $300 million in economic aid, and more in arms supplies, will have to subsidize the Iraqi economy for some time to come. But since the country is much less populous than Egypt and potentially much richer, the investment is incomparably smaller.

Syria is also ruled by the Ba'ath party, although the Syrian Ba'athists loathe their Iraqi comrades, and vice versa; relations between the two countries are if anything more strained now than they were in the days of the Hashemites. Syria has maintained fairly close relations with the Soviet Union for a long time. In 1966 the Soviets lent the Syrian government $150 million for building the Euphrates dam, and Marshal Grechko has visited Damascus almost as often as Cairo. About one thousand Soviet military advisers were stationed in Syria between 1967-71; their number is now said to be higher. Soviet warships have frequently called at the ports of Latakia and Tartus and on occasion stayed there for weeks. (These ports have not however become full-fledged Soviet bases, if only because their harbors are small and do not possess the essential facilities needed to be of real help to the Soviet fleet. The submarine base near Ras Shamra may be more important in the future.)

Hafez al Asad, Syria's present leader, came to power in a coup that ousted those of his colleagues who had gone far in their pro-Soviet enthusiasm. Though Syria has been averse to signing a formal pact with the Soviet Union similar to those signed by Egypt and Iraq, since the beginning of 1972, for reasons that are not entirely clear, Moscow and Damascus have drawn much closer together. Perhaps, following Egypt's eclipse, the Syrians saw a real chance to strengthen their position in Arab politics and to assume as well the role of main champion of the Palestinian cause; perhaps they were frightened by a series of Israeli airstrikes on their territory. In August and September 1972 the Soviet Union ostentatiously made major arms deliveries to Syria, including SAM-3 missiles. The Russians may wish to use Syrian airfields to a greater extent than in the past, and perhaps they also envisage the construction of oil pipelines from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean—especially if their designs on Persian Gulf oil are as far-reaching as many experts believe.

Syrians distrust all foreigners, and it will be interesting from that viewpoint to see how the Russians fare in Damascus. On the other hand, the Syrians are politically much less sophisticated than the Egyptians and therefore perhaps less aware of the dangers of superpower patronage. For the Russians, a military presence in Syria means of course further involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict—and in a geographical area where there is no prospect for peaceful compromise: whereas a territorial agreement might eventually be struck between Egypt and Israel, no such solution seems possible with Damascus since Israel has repeatedly stressed that it will under no circumstances give up the Golan Heights. Unlike the Egyptians, however, the Syrians have never been so rash as to proclaim a deadline for the coming war against Israel and this fact alone may make life somewhat easier for their Soviet patrons.

ALTHOUGH Iraq and Syria are now the main pillars of Soviet power in the Middle East, a couple of other minor clients also deserve consideration. One is South Yemen, the most openly terroristic regime in the Arab world. South Yemen is a political backwater, existing on alms from Russia and China, but it is potentially of some importance as a bridge to the horn of Africa, where the Soviet Union now has distinct interests. It is also a counterweight to North Yemen and Saudi Arabia. Chinese influence has receded somewhat in this area following the stoppage of military aid to the rebels in Eritrea and Dhofar, and Soviet prospects now seem better than in years past.

Lastly the Palestinians. Yassir Arafat has visited Moscow at least four times since 1968 and other Palestinian leaders have been to the Soviet Union as well. On the whole, although Moscow still maintains a certain reserve, the relationship has become warmer, and the terrorist organizations have recently received some Soviet arms.

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They hardly need them, since they get all the weapons they can possibly use from the Arab states, and sufficient money from Libya and Kuwait, but the Soviet gesture is politically significant. Basically the Palestinians can trust none of the Arab governments, and the day may come when the Soviet Union will turn out to be the mainstay of their support. The Russians meanwhile may find the Palestinians of some use in torpedoing any potential rapprochement between the Arab states and the West, or even a peace settlement with Israel. They may also want to be in a position to counteract any possible pro-Chinese sympathies among the Palestinians.

A NEW pattern of Soviet strategy in the Middle East has thus emerged during the last year. It is somewhat obfuscated by the "scatteration" of Soviet efforts, inevitable perhaps in the circumstances, but essentially it consists of a new concentration on the area of the Persian Gulf rather than on Sinai, let alone North Africa. This is not to say that the Soviet Union would be slow to seize opportunities wherever they might arise, from Pakistan to Morocco. But the stress seems now to be on the Gulf, which is to say on oil.

Though the Soviet Union apparently has immense oil reserves at home, most of them are situated in distant parts of the country and in climates which make extraction and transport prohibitively expensive. At present, Soviet oil production is increasing by 6-7 per cent yearly, considerably more slowly than consumption. (Production in 1970 was 352 million tons, in 1971 378 million, and in 1972 it will be about 400 million.) Yet, according to plan, the Soviet Union wants to cover not only its own growing needs but also by the end of the decade to supply 100 million tons yearly to the other Comecon countries, 50 million to Western Europe, the same to Japan, and perhaps also something to the United States. There is only one possible source for this oil: the Persian Gulf.

Several arguments have been advanced to show the unlikelihood of the Russians' buying a substantial part of Middle Eastern oil production. First of all, oil producers greatly prefer to sell to the West or Japan because these customers pay in hard currency, whereas the Russians base their purchases almost entirely on barter. Secondly, there is the distinct danger, of which the producers are perfectly aware, that the Soviets will try to resell Middle Eastern oil at cut-rate prices in other countries. And lastly, it is contended that the Russians cannot compete as oil distributors because they lack the experience and the facilities of the Western oil companies.

These are weighty arguments but they are purely economic in nature. The Arabs regard oil as a political weapon, and there is no reason to assume that the Russians, if the occasion arises, will not do the same. At present a small country like Libya, with enormous amounts of foreign currency or gold reserves at its disposal, can stop the flow of oil for a year or perhaps even longer without difficulty. But it remains to be seen whether ten or fifteen years hence a country like Iraq, let alone the small emirates and sheikhdoms, will still be in a position to decide on the direction of the flow of oil and the conditions of sale. It should not be beyond the resources of the Soviet Union, if circumstances warrant, to engineer a coup in Dubai or Abu Dhabi; in view of the stakes involved the temptation may well be irresistible. If this stage were in fact reached the Russians would hardly need a fleet of tankers or a network of oil refineries or filling stations to dispose of their new-found oil; Western countries would be only too eager to cooperate. The decisive question obviously is not that of distribution, but of the control of production.

WITH or without Egypt, then, the Soviet Union will maintain its position in the Middle East. The strength of that position will depend on the willingness of the various Arab countries to provide a foothold and, on the other hand, on the credibility of the American presence in the area. In view of the many rifts inside the Arab world and the fierce competition for patronage, the overall Soviet position seems fairly secure. But there is another factor—the United States—which figures centrally in Soviet thinking and may in the end prove to be decisive. Continued American support for Israel, even to the point of defying the expressed wishes of both the Soviets and the Arabs, has had the paradoxical consequence of an *improvement* in relations between the U.S. and the Arab countries, and a weakening of the Soviet position. As Bernard Lewis has remarked:

> The Egyptians have drawn their inference—that the Israelis have a good patron, while they themselves have had a bad one. Israel's patron is trustworthy and reliable, and provides what the protégé wants; Egypt's patron on the other hand has failed her in almost every respect, and has left her significantly worse off than she was before. . . .*

So the Soviet Union will continue its balancing act in the Middle East on many different levels at once, working for an atmosphere of controlled tension by helping various Arab countries to make ready for war against Israel and then restraining them at the last minute from actually going into battle, playing one Arab nation against another, and all the Arab nations against the U.S. and China; until, in the end, like a juggler with too many balls in the air, it will miss one or two, and the whole performance will have to begin again from the beginning.

* The London *Times*, September 20, 1972.

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Philip Roth Reconsidered

Irving Howe

. . . the will takes pleasures in begetting its own image.

—J. V. Cunningham

When Philip Roth published his collection of stories, *Goodbye, Columbus,* in 1959, the book was generously praised and I was among the reviewers who praised it. Whatever modulations of judgment one might want now to propose, it is not hard to see why Roth should have won approval. The work of a newcomer still in his twenties, *Goodbye, Columbus* bristled with a literary self-confidence such as few writers two or three decades older than Roth could command. His stories were immediately recognizable as his own, distinctive in voice, attitude, and subject; they possessed the lucidities of definition, though I would now add, lucidities harsh and grimacing in their over-focus. None of the fiction Roth has since published approaches this first collection in literary interest; yet, by no very surprising turn of events, his reputation has steadily grown these past few years, he now stands close to the center of our culture (if that is anything for him to be pleased about), and he is accorded serious attention both by a number of literary critics and those rabbis and Jewish communal leaders who can hardly wait to repay the animus he has lavished upon them. At least for a moment or two, until the next fashion appears, we are in the presence not only of an interesting writer but also a cultural "case."

I

The stories in *Goodbye, Columbus* are of a special kind. They are neither probings through strategic incident to reach the inner folds of character nor affectionate renderings of regional, class, or ethnic behavior. They are not the work of a writer absorbed in human experience as it is, mirroring his time with self-effacing objectivity. Nor is Roth the kind of writer who takes pleasure in discovering the world's body, yielding himself to the richness of its surfaces and the mysteries of its ultimate course. If one recalls some of the motives that have moved our novelists—a hunger to absorb and render varieties of social experience, a respect for the plenitude of the mind, a sense of awe induced by contemplation of the curve of heroic fate, a passion for moral scrutiny—none of these seems crucially to operate in Roth's work. It is, in fact, a little comic to invoke such high motifs in discussing that work, and not because Roth is a minor writer but because he is a writer who has denied himself, programmatically, the vision of major possibilities.

What one senses nevertheless in the stories of *Goodbye, Columbus* is an enormous thrust of personal and ideological assertiveness. In the clash which, like Jacob with his angel, the writer must undertake with the world around him—and, unlike Jacob, must learn when and how to lose—there can be little doubt that Roth will steadily pin his opponent to the ground. His great need is for a stance of superiority, the pleasure, as Madison Avenue puts it, of always being "on top of it." (Perhaps he should have been a literary critic.) Only rarely do his fictions risk the uncharted regions of imaginative discovery; almost all his work drives a narrative toward cognitive ends fixed in advance. Roth appears indifferent to the Keatsian persuasion that a writer should be "capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts," since that would require a discipline of patience; nor does he pay much heed to the Coleridgean persuasion that "tragedy depends on a sense of the mind's greatness," since that would mean to acknowledge the powers of *another* mind, to soften his clattering voice, and to ease himself into that receptivity to experience which is one mark of the creative imagination.

For good or bad, both in the stories that succeed and those that fail, *Goodbye, Columbus* rests in the grip of an imperious will prepared to wrench, twist, and claw at its materials in order to leave upon them the scar of its presence—as if the work of fiction were a package that needed constantly to be stamped with a signature of self. With expectations of being misunderstood I am tempted to add that, despite their severe and even notorious criticisms of Jewish life in America,

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Roth's stories are marked by a quintessentially "Jewish will," the kind that first makes its historical appearance in the autobiography of Solomon Maimon, where the intellectual aspirant sees himself as a solitary antagonist to the world of culture which, in consequence, he must conquer and reduce to acknowledgment.

The will dominating *Goodbye, Columbus* clamors to impose itself—in part through an exclusion of inconvenient perceptions—upon whatever portions of imagined life are being presented. And that is one reason these stories become a little tiresome upon rereading: one grows weary of a writer who keeps nagging and prodding and beating us over the head with the poker of his intentions. What is almost always central in Roth's stories is their "point," their hammering of idea, and once that "point" is clear, usually well before a story's end, the portrayal starts to pale, for not enough autonomous life remains and too much of the matter seems a mere reflex of the will's "begetting."

EVEN in regard to details of milieu and manners, for which Roth has been frequently praised, the will takes over and distorts. In his title novella, "Goodbye, Columbus," there are some keen notations—the refrigerator in the basement bulging with fruit, the turgidities of the wedding—which help to characterize the newly-rich Patimkins in their suburban home. And there are moments of tenderness—a quality not abundant in Roth's work—during the romance between Neil Klugman, the poor Newark boy, and Brenda Patimkin, the self-assured Radcliffe girl (though nothing she says or does could persuade one that she would ever have been admitted to Radcliffe). Yet if the novella is read with any care at all, it becomes clear that Roth is not precise and certainly not scrupulous enough in his use of social evidence. The Patimkins are easily placed—what could be easier for a Jewish writer than to elicit disdain for middle-class Jews?—but the elements of what is new in their experience are grossly manipulated. Their history is invoked for the passing of adverse judgment, at least part of which seems to me warranted, but their history is not allowed to emerge so as to make them understandable as human beings. Their vulgarity is put on blazing display but little or nothing that might locate or complicate that vulgarity is shown: little of the weight of their past, whether sustaining or sentimental; nothing of the Jewish mania for culture, whether honorable or foolish; nothing of that fearful self-consciousness which the events of the mid-20th century thrust upon the Patimkins of this world. Ripped out of the historical context that might help to define them, the Patimkins are vivid enough, but as lampoon or caricature in a novella that clearly aims for more than lampoon or caricature. (There is, for example, a placing reference to Mrs. Patimkin's membership in Hadassah, employed as a cue for easy laughs in the way watermelons once were for Southern blacks—it is an instance of how a thrust against vulgarity can itself become vulgar, and by no means the only one in Roth's work.)

On the other side of the social spectrum Roth places Aunt Gladys, still poor, fretting absurdly over her nephew's health and, quite as if she were a stand-in for the Mrs. Portnoy yet to come, rattling off one-liners about the fruit in her icebox. Aunt Gladys, we learn, is preparing for a Workmen's Circle picnic; and for a reader with even a little knowledge of Jewish immigrant life, that raises certain expectations, since the Workmen's Circle signifies a socialist and Yiddishist commitment which time, no doubt, has dimmed but which still has left some impact of sensibility on people like Aunt Gladys. But while named, as if to signal familiarity with her background, this aspect of Aunt Gladys's experience is never allowed to color Roth's portrait, never allowed to affect either the ridicule to which she is subjected nor the simplistic fable—so self-serving in its essential softness—of a poor but honorable Jewish boy withstanding suburban-Jewish vulgarity and thereupon left without any moral option in his world.

The price Roth pays for immobilizing the Patimkins into lampoon and Aunt Gladys into vaudeville is that none of the social or moral forces supposedly acting upon Neil Klugman can be dramatically marshaled. And Neil Klugman himself—poor cipher that he is, neither very *klug* nor very *man*—can never engage himself in the risks and temptations that are supposed to constitute his dilemma, if only because Roth is out there running interference, straight-arming all the other characters in behalf of this vapid alter ego. Even so extreme an admirer of Roth's work as Theodore Solotaroff acknowledges the "abstractness that Neil takes on. He . . . is too far along the path he is supposed to be traveling in the story. One could wish that he were more his aunt's nephew, more troubled and attracted by the life of the Patimkins, and more willing to test it and himself."

Now the issue is not, I had better emphasize, whether newly-rich suburban Jews are vulgar—a certain number, perhaps many, surely are—nor whether they are proper targets of satire—everyone is. What I am saying is that in its prefabricated counterpositions "Goodbye, Columbus" draws not upon a fresh encounter with the postwar experience of suburban Jews but upon literary hand-me-downs of American-Jewish fiction, popularizing styles of rebellion from an earlier moment and thereby draining them of their rebellious content.

I doubt, in any case, that Roth is really interested in a close and scrupulous observance of social life. He came to the literary scene at a moment when the dominant kind of critical talk

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was to dismiss "mere realism," as if that were a commodity so easily come by, and to praise "the imagination," as if that were a faculty which could operate apart from a bruising involvement with social existence. And this critical ideology served to reinforce Roth's own temperament as a writer, which is inclined to be impatient, snappish, and dismissive, all qualities hardly disposing him to strive for an objective (objective: to see the object as it is) perception of contemporary life.

Defending himself several years ago against the rather feckless attacks of outraged rabbis, some of whom complained that he did not provide a "balanced portrayal" of Jewish life, Roth wrote that "to confuse a 'balanced portrayal' with a novel is . . . to be led into absurdities."* Absurdities, he continued, like supposing a group of 19th-century Russian students sending off a complaint to Dostoevsky that Raskolnikov is not a "typical student." Well, that's amusing, though I think it would be quite possible to show that, in some sense, Dostoevsky *does* present a "balanced portrayal" of Russian life. In any case, Roth in his defense, as in his fiction, makes things a little too easy for himself. For the critical issue is not whether he has given a "balanced portrayal" of the Jews as a whole or even the suburban Jews, but whether his portrayal of the Patimkins as the kind of people they are is characterized by fullness and precision. After all, no fictional portrait is merely idiosyncratic, every novel or story aspires to some element of representativeness or at least reverberation—and indeed, at a crucial point in "Goodbye, Columbus," when Neil Klugman is reflecting upon what his fate would be if he were to marry Brenda, he at least takes the Patimkins to be representative of a way of life. It will not do to say that the Patimkins are "unique," for if they were they could have no interest other than as an oddity. What is at stake here is Roth's faithfulness to *his own materials*, the justice and largesse of his imaginative treatment.

There remains another line of defense against such criticism, which Roth's admirers frequently man: that he writes satire and therefore cannot be expected to hew closely to realistic detail. This is a defense that quite fails to apprehend what the nature of good satire is. To compose a satire is not at all to free oneself from the obligation to social accuracy; it is only to order that accuracy in a particular way. If it can be shown that the targets of the satirist are imprecisely located or that he is shooting wild, the consequences may be more damaging than if the same were shown for a conventional realist. And if it can be shown that the satire is self-serving—poor Neil, poor Alex . . . —then it becomes—well, imagine how absurd *Gulliver's Travels* would seem if we became persuaded that the satiric barrage against mankind allows for one little exception, a young hero troubled by the burdens of being English and resembling Jonathan Swift.

ROTH's stories begin, characteristically, with a spectacular array of details in the representation of milieu, speech, and manners and thereby we are led to expect a kind of fiction strong in verisimilitude. But then, at crucial points in the stories, there follow a series of substitutions, elements of incident or speech inserted not because they follow from the logic of the narrative but because they underscore the point Roth wishes to extract from the narrative. In "The Conversion of the Jews" a bright if obnoxious Jewish boy becomes so enraged with the snffling pieties of his Hebrew-school teacher, Rabbi Bender, that he races out of the classroom and up to the roof, threatening to jump unless the rabbi admits that "God can do anything" and "can make a child without intercourse." The plot may seem a bit fanciful and the story, as Mr. Solotaroff justly remarks, "inflated to get in the message"—but no matter, at least our attention is being held. Then, however, comes the breaking point, when the writer's will crushes his fiction: Ozzie "made them all say they believed in Jesus Christ—first one at a time, then all together." Given the sort of tough-grained Jewish urchin Ozzie is shown to be, this declamation strains our credence; it is Roth who has taken over, shouldering aside his characters and performing on his own, just as it is Roth who ends the story with the maudlin touch of Ozzie crying out, "Mamma. You should never hit anybody about God. . . ." Scratch an Ozzie, and you find a Rabbi Bender.

A richer and more ambitious story, "Eli the Fanatic" suffers from the same kind of flaws. An exotic yeshivah sponsored by a Hasidic sect settles in Woodenton, a comfortable suburb. The local Jews feel hostile, tension follows, and Eli Peck, a vulnerable Woodenton Jew, undergoes a kind of moral conversion in which he identifies or hallucinates himself as a victim in kaftan. It is difficult, if one bears in mind Roth's entire work, to take at face value this solemn espousal of yeshivah Orthodoxy as the positive force in the story; I cannot believe that the yeshivah and all it represents has been brought into play for any reason other than as a stick with which to beat Woodenton. Tzuref, the yeshivah principal, is well-drawn and allowed to speak for his outlook, as Aunt Gladys in "Goodbye, Columbus" is not: which is one reason this story builds up a certain dramatic tension. But again Roth feels obliged to drop a heavy thumb on the scales by making his suburbanites so benighted, indeed, so merely stupid, that the story finally comes apart. Here is a Woodenton Jew speaking:

Look, I don't even know about this Sunday

*"Writing about Jews," COMMENTARY, December 1963.

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school business. Sundays I drive my oldest kid all the way to Scarsdale to learn Bible stories . . . and you know what she comes up with? This Abraham in the Bible was going to kill his own *kid* for a sacrifice. She gets nightmares from it, for God's sake. You call that religion? Today a guy like that they'd lock him up.

Now, even a philistine character has certain rights, if not as a philistine then as a character in whose "reality" we are being asked to believe. To write as if this middle-class Jewish suburbanite were unfamiliar with "this Abraham" or shocked by the story of the near-sacrifice of Isaac, is simply preposterous. Roth is putting into the character's mouth, not what he could plausibly say, but what Roth thinks his "real" sentiments are. He is not revealing the character, but "exposing" him. It is a crucial failure in literary tact, one of several in the story that rouse the suspicion Roth is not behaving with good faith toward the objects of his assault.

THIS kind of tendentiousness mars a number of Roth's fictions, especially those in which a first-person narrator—Neil Klugman, Alex Portnoy—swarms all over the turf of his imaginary world, blotting out the possibility of multiple perspective. It is a weakness of fictions told in the first person that the limits of the narrator's perception tend to become the limits of the work itself. Through an "unreliable" first-person narrator it is, of course, possible to plant bits of crucial evidence that call his version of things into question, but that requires a good deal of technical sophistication and still more, a portion of self-doubt such as our culture has not greatly encouraged these past two decades. There usually follows in such first-person narratives a spilling-out of the narrator which it becomes hard to suppose is not also the spilling-out of the author. Such literary narcissism is especially notable among minor satirists, with whom it frequently takes the form of self-exemptive attacks on the shamefulness of humanity. In some of Mary McCarthy's novels, for example, all the characters are shown as deceitful and venomous, all but a heroine pure in heart and close to the heart of the author. Neither Klugman nor Portnoy is exactly pure in heart, but as a man at ease with our moment, Portnoy has learned that "sincerity" can pay substantial dividends by soliciting admiration for the candor with which it proclaims impurities. And as for those of Roth's stories that avoid the looseness of the first-person narrative, his own authorial voice quickly takes over, becoming all but indistinguishable from a first-person narrator, raucous, self-aggrandizing, and damned sure that the denouement of his story will not escape the grip of his will.

To these strictures I would offer one exception, the Roth story that, oddly, was most attacked by his rabbinical critics: "Defender of the Faith." This seems to me a distinguished performance, the example of what Roth might have made of his talent had he been stricter in his demands upon himself. Roth's description of the story is acute: "It is about one man who uses his own religion, and another's uncertain conscience, for selfish ends; but mostly it is about this other man, the narrator, who because of the ambiguities of being a member of a particular religion, is involved in a taxing, if mistaken, conflict of loyalties." This conflict is at once urgent for those caught up in it and serious in its larger moral implications. Nathan Marx, back from combat duty in Germany, is made First Sergeant of a training company in Missouri; he is a decent, thoughtful fellow whose sense of being Jewish, important though it is to him, he cannot articulate clearly. A few recruits in his company, led by Sheldon Grossbart, attach themselves to Marx, presumably out of common feeling toward the problem of being Jews in an alien setting, but actually because Grossbart means to exploit this sense of solidarity in behalf of private ends—he looks forward to the crucial favor of not being sent overseas to combat. As Roth comments, Grossbart is "a man whose lapses of integrity seem to him so necessary to his survival as to convince him that such lapses are actually committed in the name of integrity." At the end of the story, Sergeant Marx, incensed at the manipulation to which he has been subjected, makes certain that Grossbart is indeed shipped overseas, while he, Marx, braces himself to face the consequences of an act he admits to be "vindictive."

The power of this story derives from presenting a moral entanglement so as to draw out, yet not easily resolve, its inherent difficulties. Unattractive as Grossbart may be, his cunning use of whatever weapons come to hand in order to protect his skin seems entirely real; one would have to be thoroughly locked into self-righteousness not to be drawn a little, however shamefacedly, to Grossbart's urgency. The willingness of Marx to bend the rules in behalf of the Jewish recruits is plausible, perhaps even admirable; after all, he shares their loneliness and vulnerability. Established thereby as a figure of humaneness, Marx commits an act that seems shocking, even to himself, so that he must then try to resist "with all my will an impulse to turn back and seek pardon for my vindictiveness." If it is right to punish Grossbart, Marx also knows the punishment is cruel, a result, perhaps, of the same Jewish uneasiness that had first made him susceptible to Grossbart's designs.

The story does not allow any blunt distribution of moral sympathies, nor can the reader yield his heart to one character. Before the painfulness of the situation, Roth's usual habit of rapid dismissal must melt away. We are left with the texture of reality as, once in a while, a writer can summon it.

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Neither before nor after "Defender of the Faith" has Roth written anything approaching it in compositional rigor and moral seriousness. It may, however, have been the presence of this story in *Goodbye, Columbus* that led reviewers, including myself, to assume that this gifted new writer was working in the tradition of Jewish self-criticism and satire—a substantial tradition extending in Yiddish from Mendele to Isaac Bashevis Singer and in English from Abraham Cahan to Malamud and Bellow. In these kinds of writing, the assault upon Jewish philistinism and the mockery of Jewish social pretension are both familiar and unrelenting. Beside Mendele, Roth seems soft; beside Cahan, imprecise. But now, from the vantage point of additional years, I think it clear that Roth, despite his concentration on Jewish settings and his acerbity of tone, has not really been involved in this tradition. For he is one of the first American-Jewish writers who finds that it yields him no sustenance, no norms or values from which to launch his attacks on middle-class complacence.

This deficiency, if deficiency it be, need not be a fatal one for a Jewish writer, provided he can find sustenance elsewhere, in other cultures, other traditions. But I do not see that Roth has—his relation to the mainstream of American culture, in its great sweep of democratic idealism and romanticism, is decidedly meager. There is no lack of critical attitude, or attitudinizing, in Roth's stories, but much of it consists of the frayed remnants of cultural modernism, once revolutionary in significance but now reduced to little more than the commonplace "shock" of middlebrow culture. And there is a parasitic relation to the embattled sentiments and postures of older Jewish writers in America—though without any recognition that, by now, simply to launch attacks on middle-class suburbia is to put oneself at the head of the suburban parade, just as to mock the uptightness of immigrant Jews is to become the darling of their "liberated" suburban children.

One reason Roth's stories are unsatisfactory is that they come out of a thin personal culture. That he can quote Yeats and Rilke is hardly to the point. When we speak of a writer's personal culture we have in mind the ways in which a tradition, if absorbed into his work, can both release and control his creative energies. A vital culture can yield a writer those details of manners, customs, and morals which give the illusion of reality to his work. More important, *a vital culture talks back, so to say, within the writer's work,* holding in check his eccentricities, notions, and egocentrisms, providing a dialectic between what he has received and what he has willed—one can see this in novelists as various as Tolstoy, Hawthorne, Verga, and Sholem Aleichem.

When we say, consequently, that a writer betrays a thin personal culture we mean, among other possibilities, that he comes at the end of a tradition which can no longer nourish his imagination or that he has, through an act of fiat, chosen to tear himself away from that tradition—many American writers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, for example, could no longer continue with firm conviction in the line of transcendental idealism which had been so liberating fifty or sixty years earlier. It is, of course, a severe predicament for a writer to find himself in this situation; it forces him into self-consciousness, improvisation, and false starts; but if he is genuinely serious, he will try, like a farmer determined to get what he can from poor soil, to make a usable theme of his dilemmas.

Perhaps this thinness of culture has some connection with that tone of *ressentiment,* that free-floating contempt and animus, which begins to appear in Roth's early stories and grows more noticeable in his later work. Unfocused hostility often derives from unexamined depression, and the latter, which I take to be the ground-note of Roth's sensibility, fully emerges only in the two novels he wrote after *Goodbye, Columbus.* But even in the early stories one begins to hear a grind of exasperation, an assault without precise object, an irritable wish to pull down the creatures of his own imagination which can hardly be explained by anything happening within the stories themselves. If sentimentality is defined as emotion in excess of what a given situation warrants, what are we to say about irritability in excess? As one of Roth's critics, Baruch Hochman, has sharply noticed:

> The energy informing [Roth's] stories is scarcely more than the energy of irritation, an irritation so great that it makes the exposure of inanity seem a meaningful moral act. For Roth does not seem really to be concerned with the substance of the values he shows being eroded. It is not at all clear how Neil Klugman, who is so offended at the Patimkins, stands for anything substantially different from what they stand for—setting aside the fact that he is poorer than they, which he cannot help. His differences with them lie elsewhere than in the moral realm. . . .

At times the note of disgust is sounded in full, as in "Epstein," a nasty joke about a middle-aged man's hapless effort to revive his sexuality. Reading the last paragraphs of this story, arranged as a pratfall for the poor slob Epstein (and how pleasurable it is for "us," the cultivated ones, to sneer at those slobs, with their little box houses, their spreading wives, their mucky kids, their uncreative jobs), one is reminded of D. H. Lawrence's jibe about writers who "do dirt" on their characters.

II

THE standard opinion of Roth's critics has been that his two novels, *Letting Go* and *When She Was Good,* add slight luster to

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his reputation, and there is not much use in arguing against this view. Yet it should be noticed that there are patches of genuine achievement in both books, sometimes a stumbling, gasping honesty. They are not novels that yield much pleasure or grip one despite its absence, but both are marked by tokens of struggle with the materials of American life. And there are moments that come off well—the persistence of the battered divorcee, Martha Reganhart *(Letting Go)*, in raising her children decently, the precocious eeriness of little Cynthia Reganhart, the struggle of Lucy (*When She Was Good*) to raise herself above the maudlin stupor of her family. Conventional achievements all of these are, and of a kind novelists have often managed in the past—of a kind, also, they will have to manage in the future if the novel is to survive. But right now, in our present cultural situation, this is hardly the sort of achievement likely to win much attention, as Roth evidently came to see.

Roth is not a "natural" novelist at all, the kind who loves to tell stories, chronicle social life, pile on characters, and if in his early fiction he seems willfully bent on scoring "points," in the novels his will exhausts itself from the sheer need to get on with things. He is an exceedingly joyless writer, even when being very funny. The reviewers of his novels, many of them sympathetic, noticed his need to rub our noses in the muck of squalid daily existence, his mania for annotating at punitive length the bickerings of his characters. Good clean hatred that might burn through, naturalistic determinism with a grandeur of design if not detail, the fury of social rebellion—any of these would be more *interesting* than the vindictive bleakness of Roth's novels.

What, one wonders, does he really have against these unhappy creatures of his? Why does he keep pecking away at them? I think the answer might furnish a key to Roth's work. Perhaps as a leftover from the culture of modernism and perhaps as a consequence of personal temperament, Roth's two novels betray a swelling nausea before the ordinariness of human existence, its seepage of spirit and rotting of flesh. This is a response that any sensitive or even insensitive person is likely to share at some point and to some extent, but it simply does not allow a writer to sustain or provide internal complications of tone in a large-scale work. It starts as a fastidious hesitation before the unseemliness of our minds and unsightliness of our bodies; it ends as a vibration of horror before the sewage of the quotidian. Men grow paunches, women's breasts sag, the breath of the aged reeks, varicose veins bulge. It all seems insufferable, an affront to our most cherished images of self, so much so that ordinary life must be pushed away, a disorder to be despised and assaulted. It is as if, in nagging at his characters, Roth were venting some deep and unmanageable frustration with our common fate.

III

THE cruelest thing anyone can do with *Portnoy's Complaint* is to read it twice. An assemblage of gags strung onto the outcry of an analytic patient, the book thrives best on casual responses; it demands little more from the reader than a nightclub performer demands: a rapid exchange of laugh for punchline, a breath or two of rest, some variations on the first response, and a quick exit. Such might be the most generous way of discussing *Portnoy's Complaint* were it not for the solemn ecstasies the book has elicited, in line with Roth's own feeling that it constitutes a liberating act for himself, his generation, and maybe the whole culture.

The basic structural unit of *Portnoys' Complaint* is the skit, the stand-up comedian's shuffle and patter that come to climax with a smashing one-liner—indeed, it is worth noticing that a good many of our more "advanced" writers during the last two decades have found themselves turning to the skit as a form well-suited to the requirements of "swinging" and their rejection of sustained coherence of form. The controlling tone of the book is a shriek of excess, the jokester's manic wail, although, because it must slide from skit to skit with some pretense of continuity, this tone declines now and again into a whine of self-exculpation or sententiousness. And the controlling sensibility of the book derives from a well-grounded tradition of feeling within immigrant Jewish life: the coarse provincial "worldliness" flourishing in corner candy-stores and garment centers, at cafeterias and pinochle games, a sort of hard, cynical mockery of ideal claims and pretensions, all that remains to people scraped raw by the struggle for success. (This sensibility finds a "sophisticated" analogue in the smart-aleck nastiness of Jules Feiffer's film, *Carnal Knowledge*, which cannot really be understood without some reference to the undersides of Jewish immigrant life, not as these have affected the subject-matter of the film but as they have affected the vision of the people who made it.)

Much of what is funny in Roth's book—the Monkey's monologues, some rhetorical flourishes accompanying Alex's masturbation, Sophie Portnoy's amusement at chancing upon her son's sexual beginnings—rests on the fragile structure of the skit. All the skit requires or can manage is a single broad stroke: shrewd, gross, recognizable, playing on the audience's embarrassment yet not hurting it too much, so that finally its aggression can be passed off as good-fellowship. (We all have Jewish mamas, we're all henpecked husbands, we all pretend to greater sexual prowess than. . . .) The skit stakes everything on brashness and energy, both of which Roth has or simulates in abundance. Among writers of the past Dickens and Céline have used the skit brilliantly, but Dickens always and Céline sometimes understood

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that in a book of any length the skit—as well as its sole legitimate issue, the caricature—must be put to the service of situations, themes, stories allowing for complication and development. (A lovely example of this point can be seen in the skits that Peter Sellers performs in the movie version of *Lolita*.)

It is on the problem of continuity that Portnoy—or, actually, Roth himself—trips up. For once we are persuaded to see his complaints as more than the stuff of a few minutes of entertainment, once we are led to suppose that they derive from some serious idea or coherent view of existence, the book quickly falls to pieces and its much-admired energy (praised by some critics as if energy were a value regardless of the ends to which it is put) serves mainly to blur its flimsiness. Technically this means that, brief as it is, the book seems half again too long, since there can be very little surprise or development in the second half, only a recapitulation of motifs already torn to shreds in the first.

It is worth looking at a few of the book's incoherences, venial for a skit, fatal for a novel. Alex is allowed the human attribute of a history within the narrative space of the book, presumably so that he can undergo change and growth, but none of the characters set up as his foils, except perhaps the Monkey, is granted a similar privilege. Alex speaks for imposed-upon, vulnerable, twisted, yet self-liberating humanity; the other characters, reduced to a function of his need, an echo of his cry, cannot speak or speak back as autonomous voices but simply go through their paces like straight-men mechanically feeding lines to a comic. Even more than in Roth's earlier work, the result is claustrophobia of voice and vision: *he never shuts up*, this darling Alex, nor does Roth detach himself sufficiently to gain some ironic distance. The psychic afflictions of his character Roth would surely want to pass up, but who can doubt that Portnoy's cry from the heart—enough of Jewish guilt, enough of the burdens of history, enough of inhibition and repression, it is time to "let go" and soar to the horizons of pleasure—speaks in some sense for Roth?

The difficulty that follows from this claustrophobic vision is not whether Mrs. Portnoy can be judged a true rendering, even as caricature, of Jewish mothers—only chuckleheads can suppose that to be a serious question!—but whether characters like Mr. and Mrs. Portnoy have much reality or persuasiveness within the fictional boundaries set by Roth himself. Sophie Portnoy has a little, because there are moments when Alex, or Roth, can't help liking her, and because the conventional lampoon of the Jewish mother is by now so well established in our folklore it has almost become an object of realistic portraiture in its own right. As for Mr. Portnoy, a comparison suggests itself between this constipated *nudnik* whom Alex would pass off as his father and "Mr. Fumfotch" in Daniel Fuchs's novel *Homage to Blenholt*. Fuchs's character is also a henpecked husband, also worn down by the struggle for bread, but he is drawn with an ironic compassion that rises to something better than itself: to an objectivity that transcends either affection or derision. In his last novel Fuchs remarks, while writing about figures somewhat like those in Roth's work, "It was not enough to call them low company and pass on"—and if this can be said about Depression Jews in Brighton Beach, why not also about more or less affluent ones in the Jersey suburbs?

We notice, again, that Portnoy attributes his sexual troubles to the guilt-soaked Jewish tradition as it has been carried down to him by his mother. Perhaps; who knows? But if we are to accept this simplistic determinism, why does it never occur to him, our Assistant Commissioner of Human Opportunity who once supped with John Lindsay in the flesh, that by the same token the intelligence on which he preens himself must also be attributed to the tradition he finds so repugnant—so that his yowl of revulsion against "my people," that they should "stick your suffering heritage up your suffering ass," becomes, let us say, a little ungenerous, even a little dopey.

And we notice, again, that while Portnoy knows that his sexual difficulties stem from his Jewishness, the patrician New England girl with whom he has an affair also turns out to be something of a sexual failure: she will not deliver him from the coils of Jewish guilt through the magic of fellatio. But if both Jewishness and Protestantism have deeply inhibiting effects on sexual performance—and as for Catholicism, well, we know those Irish girls!—what then happens to this crucial flake of Portnoy's wisdom, which the book invites us to take with some seriousness? As for other possible beliefs, from Ethical Culture to Hare Krishna, there can surely be little reason to suppose they will deliver us from the troubles of life which, for all we know, may be lodged in the very nature of things or, at the least, in those constraints of civilization which hardly encircle Jewish loins exclusively.

There is something suspect about Portnoy's complaining. From what he tells us one might reasonably conclude that, in a far from perfect world, he is not making out so badly; the boys on his block, sexual realists that they are, would put it more pungently. Only in Israel does he have serious difficulties, and for that there are simple geographical solutions. What seems really to be bothering Portnoy is a wish to sever his sexuality from his moral sensibilities, to cut it away from his self as historical creature. It's as if he really supposed the super-ego, or *post coitum triste*, were a Jewish invention. This wish—Norman O. Brown as a *yingele*—strikes me as rather foolish, an adolescent fantasy carrying within itself an inherent

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negation; but it is a fantasy that has accumulated a great deal of power in contemporary culture. And it helps explain, I think, what Roth's true feelings about, or relation to, Jewishness are. *Portnoy's Complaint* is not, as enraged critics have charged, an anti-Semitic book, though it contains plenty of contempt for Jewish life. Nor does Roth write out of traditional Jewish self-hatred, for the true agent of such self-hatred is always indissolubly linked with Jewish past and present, quite as closely as those who find in Jewishness moral or transcendent sanctions. What the book speaks for is a yearning to undo the fate of birth; there is no wish to do the Jews any harm (a little nastiness is something else), nor any desire to engage with them as a fevered antagonist; Portnoy is simply crying out to be left alone, to be released from the claims of distinctiveness and the burdens of the past, so that, out of his own nothingness, he may create himself as a "human being." Who, born a Jew in the 20th century, has been so lofty in spirit never to have shared this fantasy? But who, born a Jew in the 20th century, has been so foolish in mind as to dally with it for more than a moment?

WHAT, in any case, *is Portnoy's Complaint*—a case-history burlesqued, which we are invited to laugh at, or a struggle of an afflicted man to achieve his liberation, which we are invited to cheer on? Dr. Bruno Bettelheim has written a straight-faced essay purporting to be the case notes of Alex's psychoanalyst, Dr. O. Spielvogel, who can barely restrain his impatience with Alex's effort to mask his true problems with "all the clichés of a spoiled Jewish childhood."

> A few times I [Dr. Spielvogel] indicated the wish to say something, but he only talked on the more furiously. . . . This extremely intelligent young Jew does not recognize that what he is trying to do, by reversing the Oedipal situation, is to make fun of me, as he does of everyone, thus asserting his superiority. . . . His overpowering love for his mother is turned into a negative projection, so that what becomes overpowering is the mother's love for him. . . . While consciously he experienced everything she did as destructive, behind it is an incredible wish for more, more, more. . . .

Now this is amusing, though not as amusing as the fact that it often constitutes the line of defense to which Roth's admirers fall back when the book's incoherence is revealed ("after all, it's a patient on the couch, everyone knows you can't take what he says at face value. . . ."). But to see the book in this light, as the mere comic record of a very sick man, is radically to undercut its claims for expressing radical new truths. Roth, never unwary, anticipates the problem by having Portnoy say, "Is this truth I'm delivering up, or is it just plain *kvetching*? Or is *kvetching* for people like me a *form* of truth?" Well there's *kvetching* and *kvetching*. At times it can be a form of truth, but when the gap is so enormous between manifest content and what Dr. Spielvogel *cum* Bettelheim takes to be its inner meaning, then *kvetching* becomes at best an untruth from which the truth must be violently wrenched.

It seems hard to believe that Roth would accept the view that his book consists merely of comic griping; certainly the many readers who saw it as a banner behind which to rally would not accept that view. For, in a curious way, *Portnoy's Complaint* has become a cultural document of some importance. Younger Jews, weary or bored with all the talk about their heritage, have taken the book as a signal for "letting go" of both their past and perhaps themselves, a guide to swinging in good conscience or better yet, without troubling about conscience. For some Gentile readers the book seems to have played an even more important role. After the Second World War, as a consequence of certain unpleasantnesses that occurred during the war, a wave of philo-Semitism swept through our culture. This wave lasted for all of two decades, in the course of which books by Jewish writers were often praised (in truth, overpraised) and a fuss made about Jewish intellectuals, critics, etc. Some literary people found this hard to bear, but they did. Once *Portnoy's Complaint* arrived, however, they could almost be heard breathing a sigh of relief, for it signaled an end to philo-Semitism in American culture, one no longer had to listen to all that talk about Jewish morality, Jewish endurance, Jewish wisdom, Jewish families. Here was Philip Roth himself, a writer who even seemed to know Yiddish, confirming what had always been suspected about those immigrant Jews but had recently not been tactful to say.

The talent that went into *Portnoy's Complaint* and portions of *Goodbye, Columbus* is real enough, but it has been put to the service of a creative vision deeply marred by vulgarity. It is very hard, I will admit, to be explicit about the concept of vulgarity: people either know what one is referring to, as part of the tacit knowledge that goes to make up a coherent culture, or the effort to explain is probably doomed in advance. Nevertheless, let me try. By vulgarity in a work of literature I am not here talking about the presence of certain kinds of words or the rendering of certain kinds of actions. I have in mind, rather, the impulse to submit the rich substance of human experience, sentiment, value, and aspiration to a radically reductive leveling or simplification; the urge to assault the validity of sustained gradings and discriminations of value, so that in some extreme instances the concept of vulgarity is dismissed as up-tight or a mere mask for repressiveness; the wish to pull down the reader in common with the characters of the work, so that he will not be tempted to suppose that any inclinations he has toward the good, the

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beautiful, or the ideal merit anything more than a Bronx cheer; and finally, a refusal of that disinterestedness of spirit in the depiction and judgment of other people which seems to me the writer's ultimate resource.

That I have here provided an adequate definition of vulgarity in literature I do not for a moment suppose—though I don't know of a better one. It ought, however, to serve our present purposes by helping to make clear, for example, the ways in which a book like *Portnoy's Complaint*, for all its scrim of sophistication, is spiritually linked with the usual sentimental treatment of Jewish life in the work of popular and middlebrow writers. Between *Portnoy's Complaint* and *Two Cents Plain* there is finally no great difference of sensibility.

Perhaps the matter can be clarified by a comparison. Hubert Selby's novel, *Last Exit to Brooklyn*, portrays a segment of urban life—lumpen violence, gang-bangs, rape, sheer debasement—that is utterly appalling, and the language it must record is of a kind that makes Roth seem reticent; yet as I read Selby's book there is no vulgarity in it whatever, for he takes toward his barely human figures a stance of dispassionate objectivity, writing not with "warmth" or "concern" but with a disciplined wish to see things as they are. He does not wrench, he does not patronize, he does not aggrandize. Repugnant as it often is, *Last Exit to Brooklyn* seems to me a pure-spirited book; amusing as it often is, *Portnoy's Complaint* a vulgar book.

IV

ABOUT the remainder of Roth's work I have little to say.

Our Gang, purporting to be a satire on Richard Nixon, is a coarse-grained replica of its subject. A flaccid performance, it has some interest through embodying a strong impulse in our culture, the impulse to revert not so much to the pleasures of infantilism as to the silliness of the high-school humor column. About this book I would repeat what Henry James once said of a Trollope novel: "Our great objection . . . is that we seem to be reading a work written for children, a work prepared for minds unable to think, a work below the apprehension of the average man or woman."

The Breast,* extravagantly praised by my literary betters, is a work to which, as students would say, "I cannot relate." Well-enough written and reasonably ingenious, it is finally boring—tame, neither shocking nor outrageous, and tasteless in both senses of the word. Discussions will no doubt persist as to its "meaning," but first it might be better to ask whether, as a work of literature, it exists. For simply on the plane of narrative it cannot, or ought not, hold the interest of a reasonably mature reader.

Flaubert once said that a writer must choose between an audience and readers. Evidently Roth has made his choice.

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The New Politics & the Democrats

Penn Kemble and Josh Muravchik

IN 1969 the Commission on Party Structure and Delegate Selection of the Democratic party set out to make basic revisions in party rules. Its purpose was to open the party to wider rank-and-file participation so that the nominee of future conventions might more accurately reflect the ideas and sentiments of the Democratic electorate. The chairman of the commission, George McGovern, was, he said, persuaded to run for his party's Presidential nomination because major reforms were ultimately enacted. Later, after winning the nomination, he explained that it had been the reforms which made his victory possible.

But immediately after the reformed convention, opinion polls showed an unprecedented defection of rank-and-file Democrats to a Republican candidate who previously had been distinguished as one of the most unpopular Presidents in modern history. While most national Democratic leaders endorsed their nominee and worked to bring him additional support, Democratic leaders and party workers in scores of communities turned their backs on the national ticket. The candidate and his supporters—who had previously described the traditional party apparatus as an unrepresentative, outmoded shell—now pleaded for help from those upon whom they had lavished scorn. But it was too late. The revolution which had thrilled the reformers in July was already well on its way to bringing a counterrevolution in November.

With their effects on the electoral fortunes of the Democratic party no longer in doubt, the reforms have perhaps lost that sanctity which so long sheltered them from serious appraisal. Until now, the respectability and apparent idealism of their proponents have made criticism all but impossible. But it is now evident that serious criticism is deserved. The reforms have left one of the major institutions of American democracy in a shambles. They have, moreover, suggested the dangers in the broader current of political ideas from which the reforms were drawn—a current which still has powerful influence not only in our political life, but also in our educational, religious, and economic affairs.

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I

FROM the time it was set up in early 1969 by Fred Harris, then chairman of the Democratic National Committee, the McGovern commission was an instrument of the New-Politics wing of the party. Harris, himself a Humphrey nominee, but nursing his own political ambitions, did not guard the interests of the Humphrey wing of the party with an unwavering vigilance. He appointed McGovern as the commission's chairman. Senator Harold Hughes, a key supporter of the McCarthy campaign, was chosen as its vice-chairman, and Robert Nelson, who previously had been McCarthy's administrative assistant, became the staff director. Nelson's somewhat moderate inclinations were more than compensated for by two energetic and militant New-Politics ideologues—Ken Bode, director of research, and Eli Segal, chief counsel—whose view of the party was "reform or die."

The twenty-eight members of the commission whom Harris selected did include representatives from the moderate wing of the party. But they were outweighed and outvoted by New-Politics liberals such as Fred Dutton, David Mixner of the Vietnam Moratorium Committee, and Congressman Don Fraser. (Reformers claimed they had even received a pledge from Harris not to appoint any people to the commission who would be "opposed to" reform—although nearly half of the delegates to the 1968 convention had voted against one of the key reform resolutions.) Will Davis, former chairman of the State Democratic Committee of Texas, was one of the few McGovern commission members who resisted the direction set by the leadership. But the skeptics had little influence at the occasional meetings of the commission—the real work was carried out under McGovern's direction by the militant young staff.

In its early proceedings the commission took up the kinds of limited suggestions that might

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have been expected: ending the remaining hindrances to black participation in the South, establishing clear rules and open channels for party governance, and abolishing the unit rule. The objectives of the commission were consistently referred to as "recommendations." Perhaps this moderate beginning disarmed some of the commission's members. But a sudden and sweeping change occurred in the fall of 1969. A few months earlier the Presidential hopes of the leading contender for the 1972 nomination had skidded to disaster at Chappaquiddick. Almost at once the wide-open battle for the '72 nomination began taking shape, and one of the first candidates to begin planning a campaign, according to press reports in September of 1969, was Senator McGovern.

During this same period the reform commission under McGovern was seized with unexpected vigor. At its November 1969 meeting the staff, with virtually no advance notice, introduced the proposal for a quota system for representation at national conventions. Quotas were established not only for blacks—a group which had historically been denied participation in Democratic party affairs in the South—but also for two newly classified victims of political discrimination, women and youth. An even more spectacular leap was taken in the commission's definition of its own purposes and authority: *it claimed for itself supreme decision-making power for reshaping the entire process of delegate selection to the national Democratic convention*!

The reform commission had its origins in two resolutions of the 1968 convention. The first of these, the majority report of the credentials committee, called on the chairman of the Democratic National Committee to establish a special committee which would ". . . recommend to the Democratic National Committee such improvements as can assure even broader citizen participation in the delegate selection process." The second resolution, a minority report of the rules committee, passed by a vote of 1,351 to 1,206—the narrowest margin of any convention decision. This required the call for the 1972 convention to include provisions that would assure all Democratic voters a "full and timely opportunity to participate" in the selection of convention delegates. But the resolution went on to explain such a process as one in which the unit rule "would not be used in any stage of the delegate selection process," and also in which party primary, convention, or committee procedures could be employed, so long as they were open to public participation within the calendar year of the national convention.

A CAREFUL consideration of these resolutions reveals how far the McGovern commission exceeded its mandate in the guidelines it eventually imposed on the party. First, it is clearly stated that the commission must be responsible to the Democratic National Committee. There is no suggestion in either resolution that the convention was considering a quota system of representation for blacks—whose role in the party had been a subject of historic concern by reformers—and certainly not such a system for women or youth. (In fact, an earlier reform effort which was sometimes claimed as a precedent by the McGovern commission—the Special Equal Rights Committee chaired by Governor Richard Hughes—had specifically rejected quotas in drawing up its report to the 1968 convention.) Neither of these resolutions hinted at the restrictions against participation in delegate selection by state party officials which appear in the McGovern guidelines. There is a specific reference to the validity of procedures whereby party committees select delegates, although such procedures were virtually outlawed by the McGovern commission. Finally, there is an unambiguous mandate for striking down the unit rule in delegate selection. The commission sidestepped the logical application of this section to the winner-take-all primary—a curious decision which proved to be decisive in McGovern's nomination in Miami.

The quota proposal first appeared at the same time that the commission was redefining its mandate; it was adopted at the November 1969 meeting by the margin of a single vote. The reformers have since denied that they intended to create a quota system, or that such a system was eventually put into effect. Their formula required state parties to "encourage participation [of blacks, women, and youth]—including representation on the national convention delegation in reasonable relationship to the group's presence in the population of the state." The full import of this proposition became clear in its application. When the commission issued its official interpretation of the meaning of this guideline to state Democratic chairmen, the phrase "to encourage" was dropped. Instead it spelled out that the representation of the chosen groups in reasonable relationship to their population was a "requirement" which state parties had to meet. Moreover, a later administrative memo issued by the commission and endorsed by the now National Chairman Lawrence O'Brien asserted that ". . . whenever the proportion of women, minorities, and young people is less than the proportion of these groups in the total population and the delegation is challenged . . . such a challenge will constitute a *prima facie* showing of violation of the guidelines, and the state party along with the challenged delegation, has the burden of showing that the state party took full and affirmative action to achieve such representation. . . ."

One can hardly tell whether most of the commission members knew at the beginning that

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in effect they were establishing a quota system and sought to disguise it, or whether they were themselves confused about the implications of what they did. It does seem likely, however, that McGovern knew. He later boasted to an interviewer from the *National Journal*: "The way we got the quota thing through was by not using the word 'quotas.'" At McGovern's suggestion, a footnote was appended to the guidelines on representation which demonstrates a unique use of language that distinguishes New-Politics spokesmen from the old-line party bosses:

> It is the understanding of the Commission that this [proportional representation] is not to be accomplished by the mandatory imposition of quotas.

The true purpose of this amendment is suggested by the fact that those voting for it included the militant minority on the commission which openly advocated strict quotas.

II

THE process by which the McGovern commission gained full authority over the reform process was equally remarkable. The commission staff was clearly aware that it might encounter resistance and even a veto against some of its more drastic proposals from the Democratic National Committee. On November 3, 1969 the staff posed the following questions in a memo to Chairman McGovern:

> The DNC is having a meeting in January 1970. Do we want to submit our guidelines to them as a "report," *as mandated by the convention . . .* ? If submitted to the DNC and rejected, what are the consequences? [Emphasis added.]

But the decision was made to circumvent the DNC. The rationalization for this appears in the official commission report:

> Because the Commission was created by virtue of actions taken at the 1968 Convention, we believe that our legal responsibility extends to that body, and that body alone. We view ourselves as the agent of that convention on all matters related to delegate selection. Unless the 1972 Convention chooses to review any steps the Commission has taken, we regard our guidelines for delegate selection as binding on the states.

Even more remarkably, the DNC soon gave in to the reformers' interpretation. There were, to be sure, some muffled objections from figures outside the committee. Hubert Humphrey, some AFL-CIO leaders, and others were known to have believed that the reformers had exceeded their mandate, and that their guidelines would damage the party in 1972. But such misgivings were overridden when the reformers gained an unlikely collaborator, who proved decisive to the New-Politics drive for control of the party. On May 18, 1972 Joseph Califano, counsel to the Democratic National Committee, wrote a memo to Chairman O'Brien endorsing the McGovern commission's claim to complete authority over the delegate-selection procedures. Only the delegates to the 1972 convention, he averred, could alter the reform guidelines in any way. This memo began a pattern of concession which Califano and O'Brien followed right through to the Miami convention.*

On February 19, 1971, a critical Democratic National Committee meeting was convened to authorize a call for the 1972 convention. (The call is a document listing the apportionment of convention delegates, the rules for delegate certification, and other matters necessary to the organization of a national convention.) For the reform guidelines to have had binding status on the state parties for the 1972 convention, they had to be incorporated into the call. Here Califano argued that the guidelines were "not within the powers of this Committee [the DNC], or anybody except the 1972 convention, to change." The committee, dutiful though from the record apparently somewhat bewildered, adopted the guidelines, and the reformers were exultant. "The guidelines were adopted by the Democratic National Committee without a dissenting vote," they proclaimed. No wonder: because of Califano's presentation, there had been no real vote at all.

A final opportunity for a democratic review of the guidelines came at the meeting of the credentials committee of the 1972 convention. The credentials committee is a creature of the convention—and even the reformers had acknowledged that the convention could overturn their guidelines. But by the time the 1972 convention assembled, the new guidelines already had been put into wide effect. The state parties had succumbed to the combined pressure of the commission staff and DNC officials. Many of the delegates who came to the credentials committee

*It can be argued that two procedural rulings at the convention by Califano and O'Brien were decisive in securing McGovern's nomination. Both of these were made under pressure of threats by top McGovern leaders that they would wreck the convention if the rulings did not go their way. The first was the decision that a majority of 1,433 would be sufficient to seat the McGovern delegates from California. The anti-McGovern forces argued that the standard majority of 1,509 should be necessary. The second was that 151 members of the challenged McGovern delegation from California would be able to vote on the challenge to their own delegation, although a serious question was raised about the propriety of this. Norman Mailer, a McGovern supporter, summed up these decisions accurately in his report on the convention when he said: "It was equivalent to giving the nomination to McGovern. The old pol [O'Brien] had decided for the new politics." It is hard to imagine a clearer instance of a victory engineered by party bosses in their hotel rooms through the manipulation of procedural rules.

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would have been calling into question their own legitimacy and the legitimacy of their state's convention delegations had they raised objections at that point. Nevertheless, Califano and O'Brien again took measures to avoid debate.

The McGovern commission rules, Califano told the credentials committee, are ". . . the rules that have been set up and adopted by your national party. They are no longer the McGovern Commission Rules, or the Fraser Commission Rules. They are the Democratic Party Rules." The credentials committee deferred to his opinion, with the result that the new rules were never in any form brought before the 1972 convention. The party had been radically transformed by an agency which through bluff and maneuver had successfully avoided all mechanisms of democratic review.

The cooperation of party professionals such as O'Brien and Califano was decisive to the reformers' success. For some time the reformers had believed, with evident reason, that party officials were working against them. Their response had been to invoke threats of party splits and memories of convention chaos to get their way. When the possibility of conflict with the DNC seemed likely, Ken Bode left the McGovern commission to set up an independent organization—the Center for Political Reform—financed by Stewart Mott and other wealthy liberals. Bode announced that a purpose of his organization would be to "research the ballot requirement for a supplemental line (fourth party) at the Presidential level in each state for 1972." The McGovern commission itself broadcast fears of a split in its official materials:

> If we are not an open party, if we do not represent the demands of change, then the danger is not that people will go to the Republican party, it is that there will no longer be a way for people committed to orderly change to fulfill their needs and desires within our traditional political system. It is that they will turn to third- and fourth-party politics or the anti-politics of the street.

Party leaders were vulnerable to such intimidation because of the pervasive belief that it had been the defections of McCarthy liberals which cost the Democrats victory in 1968. Together with most commentators they ignored the numerically more significant defections of blue-collar and Southern voters to Nixon and Wallace.* Nor did they acknowledge that the style and substance of the New-Politics movement—which they were so willing to conciliate—were among the greatest causes of these defections among traditional Democratic voters. One wonders whether an even more dramatic demonstration of this political reality will be convincing.

The reluctance of party officials to oppose the guidelines—whether they acted out of fear or confusion—is well appreciated by the reformers themselves. According to Bob Nelson, staff director to the McGovern commission, "Had the National Committee put our recommendations to a vote in 1969, they wouldn't have passed. We were able to wait until the state parties had begun to act on our proposals. Then the reforms became an accomplished fact."

"We always suspected," he added, "that our mandate wasn't as strong as some people said it was."

III

How did the McGovern reforms contribute to the domination of the convention by the New-Politics forces? A small though significant portion of their majority was gained through direct exploitation of some of the most questionable of the new rules. But perhaps even more decisive were the indirect ways in which the McGovernites benefited from their dual role as authors of the rules and players in the game.

The chief complaint of the McCarthy forces at the 1968 convention was that the "old" politicians who devised and administered the election procedures were also partisans for a particular side. One result of the McGovern reforms was simply to reverse the roles. In 1972 it was the New-Politics faction which more or less dominated the delegate elections—elections about which they were far from disinterested. For a full year after he had decided to run for the nomination, McGovern remained as chairman of the reform commission. (This did not deter him, however, from supporting several measures which limited the influence of party officials in the delegate-selection process, supposedly in the interest of an authentic rank-and-file decision.) As the delegate selection process got underway, key staff members of the commission—notably Segal, Bode, and Richard Stearns—went to work as advisers to Democratic insurgents.

Those who framed the guidelines also served as their interpreters. The commission staff worked throughout the delegate-selection period advising state parties on the application of the new rules. The experience of the Democrats of Kentucky, a state not noted for the latest in liberal fashion, provides one illustration of how the McGovern forces exploited their position.

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* Election returns in 1968 showed that Humphrey was not significantly weakened by liberal defections in such centers of the new liberalism as Berkeley, Cambridge, or Manhattan. But Gallup Poll figures on blue-collar sentiment tell a much neglected story:

	1960	*1964*	*1968*
Democrat	60%	71%	50%
Republican	40%	29%	35%
Wallace	—	—	15%

No one thought, however, to devise "reforms" of either the party or its policies in response to this disastrous trend.

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The Kentucky Democratic leadership, anxious to comply fully with the rules, sent a representative to Washington early in 1972 to get firsthand guidance from the McGovern commission. He was somewhat dismayed when he was told that the rules required proportional representation by candidate preference in the election of delegates from each district. Nevertheless, his state party followed these instructions, and allowed McGovern supporters ten delegate seats, although they were a minority in every district. But in fact proportional representation was not required by the guidelines; it was only "recommended." The McGovern camp understood this distinction and, brushing aside the "recommendation," allowed no seats to the opposition minority in many places where Kentucky's election system was used.

McGovern also gained a large bloc of votes in the credentials battles at the Miami convention. Most publicized were the 59 "Daley" delegates who were thrown out in favor of McGovern supporters from Chicago, although no one could question that the former had been duly chosen in an open, fair election. The challenge rested on a reform technicality: the Daley organization had not invited its opponents to participate in drawing up its slates. The opposition did have easy access to the ballot for its own slates, and in many areas actually ran candidates. Daley's slate did not receive a preferential position on the ballot. Over 900,000 votes were cast in the primary, and the anti-Daley slates were massively defeated. At the Miami convention the reformers replaced the Daley delegation with a group largely committed to McGovern. This delegation was led by Jesse Jackson, who had not voted in the primary himself and who had not even been a registered Democrat. The challenge slate, it was later confirmed, had itself been drawn up at closed meetings . . . from which Daley supporters had been excluded!

The McGovern forces also benefited, although somewhat less directly, from the sheer confusion into which party leaders were thrown. The new rules were anything but self-explanatory: on numerous points they were even self-contradictory. In Georgia and South Carolina, for example, challenges were filed alleging that the state parties had failed to take "affirmative action" to assure adequate representation of women. Hearings were held by the credentials committee in both states. The hearing officers found that greater action to involve women had been taken by the South Carolina party than by the Georgia party, but held the former in violation, not the latter.

The rules were so confusing and, if vigorously applied, so demanding that nearly half of the 3,016 delegates were under challenge when the convention proceedings opened. Although this deluge of challenges bore down heavily on party regulars, it created little problem for the McGovernites since Eli Segal, who had helped frame the guidelines, was in charge of delegate operations for the McGovern campaign. Segal's work was made even easier in that credentials challenges for the National Women's Political Caucus—the agency which brought the majority of all challenges—were handled by his own wife. Moreover, in states where McGovern forces had themselves violated the guidelines, the chosen slates were often allowed to go unchallenged.

Finally, the New-Politics convention coup was spurred by the whole thrust of the reforms toward eliminating the influence of party leadership. The guidelines went well beyond correcting past abuses of party "bosses." In the past, party officials had all too often hand-picked the slates and committees. Now they were denied the right even to nominate candidates to run for election to such positions. Similar rules were devised to regulate slate-making, regardless of whether it was carried on by officials or private citizens. Indisputably, these practices had often involved abuses—particularly where slates were presented to closed conventions or committee meetings without real opportunity for amendment, and where the difficulties of getting opposition slates on the ballot were severe. But the reformers' remedy exceeded a proper cure. It required that no group or individual could devise a slate to be submitted to the electorate without holding a publicly announced slate-making meeting in which anyone could participate, whether or not he shared the political outlook of those advancing the slate and, in fact, even if he was not a Democrat! A labor slate, by this logic, could not be formed without a public meeting allowing participation by management, a liberal slate without permitting the participation of conservatives, or a law-and-order slate without the meeting being open to H. Rap Brown and Jerry Rubin.

In response to these and other rules, many state parties turned to more plebiscitarian methods of electing convention delegates, especially primaries. Primary elections for convention delegates were used in 13 states in 1968; in 1972, 22 states employed this method. The primary system, although it may enable an aroused electorate to oust a clearly corrupt or unrepresentative machine, also gives an advantage to energetic minorities, since the masses of people do not vote in primaries. Furthermore, the vote in the 1972 primaries for candidates of the extremes—Wallace and McGovern—far exceeded the support those candidates could have been expected to receive in a general election.

IV

As the convention approached Ken Bode proclaimed that ". . . the Democrats who convene in Miami will be the

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most representative group ever gathered in one spot in our party's history." Just how representative they actually were was unwittingly explained by Shirley MacLaine. Her own delegation—McGovern's California delegation, second largest at the convention—looked "like a couple of high schools, a grape boycott, a Black Panther rally, and four or five politicians who walked in the wrong door." Apparently many voters shared her impressions—if not her enthusiastic approval.

The anti-Daley delegation from Chicago was approved by the convention as fully representative in terms of the McGovern rules. Yet as Mike Royko, no Daley fan, has pointed out, it contained only three Poles and one Italian—from the city that has been the greatest stronghold of ethnic Democrats. The delegation from Iowa did not have even one farmer. And while Iowa has the highest proportion of senior citizens of any state except Florida, it had no delegates over sixty-five. New York's delegation included only three representatives of organized labor, although New York has more union members than any other state. (To compensate for this distortion there were at least nine persons on the New York delegation who were publicly identified with the Gay Liberation movement.) A Washington *Post* survey, which described the convention delegates as a "new elite," found that a full 39 per cent had taken some postgraduate work, as compared to a mere 4 per cent of the general population, and that the annual incomes of 31 per cent of the delegates exceeded $25,000, while those of another 31 per cent fell between $15,000 and $25,000. (A comparison of these figures with earlier figures cited by the McGovern commission itself suggests that the delegates to the '72 convention may have been even wealthier than those who came to Chicago four years before.)

But, most significantly, the convention made its overwhelming choice a candidate who had won no more than 25 per cent of the total votes cast in primaries—fewer than Humphrey and only slightly more than those cast for the unfinished candidacy of George Wallace—and who had shown remarkably low standing in the polls during most of the period when he was capturing majorities or near-majorities in caucuses and conventions. On the other hand, firm supporters of Senator Henry Jackson accounted for only 2 or 3 per cent of the entire convention. Yet a Louis Harris report issued as the convention opened described Senator Jackson as the candidate whose stands on issues most clearly resembled the attitudes of the Democratic electorate.

The Miami convention may have included far higher proportions of women, blacks, and youth than any previous convention, but as crushing evidence from the polls soon proved, and as the election itself would confirm, the delegates were hardly representative of the political views of the Democratic electorate. What they did represent was the views of the affluent, the educated, and the supporters of New-Politics liberalism.

V

It is not surprising that the McGovern reforms should have led to so unrepresentative a convention, for in certain of their major aspects these reforms run counter to the spirit of responsible democracy. Thus the McGovern quotas, as virtually everyone who has given any thought to the subject has by now recognized, are unrepresentative even in their own terms. There are, after all, other categories besides blacks, women, and youth. If there are to be quotas, should they not be established for each of the biological categories in the population? And why should quotas be based exclusively on biological distinctions? There is surely as much political sense in having quotas by economic class, educational level, or cultural background. And if past exclusion is to be a criterion of preferential treatment, other groups have at least as good a claim as women and youth.

The fact is, however, that the purpose of the McGovern quotas was not to make the convention more representative of the Democratic electorate as a whole, but to favor the affluent liberals within the party and to diminish the influence of its lower-middle and working-class constituents.

Those who take up the vocation of politics, as Max Weber insisted, first must have an extraordinary amount of free time. Such time is readily available to the suburban housewives and the subsidized students who have provided so many second-level leaders and foot soldiers to the New-Politics movement—and who, in practice, are the "women" and the "young" singled out by the McGovern quotas. The working-class woman has no free time to speak of: she faces consuming responsibilities in the home—without the benefit of maids, appliances, and child-care services—and she often holds a job as well. As to the working-class youth, he also bears economic burdens which do not weigh on the charmed "kids" of the New Politics, and he hasn't had formal training in law school or experience in the National Student Association to ease him into a political role. If working-class women and youths are to be represented in a political convention, it must in large measure be by professional politicians responsive to their interests or leaders of organizations dedicated to those interests, such as the labor movement. The effect, then, of guidelines that denied convention roles to hundreds of labor officials and party stalwarts was to discriminate against the lower classes by denying them adequate representation. The election results should have

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proved that these men cannot accurately be described as mere obstructions who come between the electorate and the more authentic leadership offered by the New-Politics movement.

Nor did the quotas for "women" and "youth" make the Democratic party more representative of even those two groups. Shirley MacLaine, Gloria Steinem, and Bella Abzug claimed to speak for women, but two weeks after the convention the polls showed that women opposed the McGovern ticket by two to one. The campus activists of the New Politics, with a shamelessness that could only have come from ignorance, put themselves forward as the voice of American youth, but the polls also showed Nixon winning support from half of the youth, and possibly more. Blacks, by contrast, were supporting the McGovern ticket in large proportions, but signs pointed to one of the lowest turnouts of black voters in recent history. For in place of the blacks from the NAACP chapters, the A. Philip Randolph Institute, or the Democratic organizations, the convention had brought forth leaders of the type of Jesse Jackson—the kind of TV militant who, as one black labor activist told a union meeting, "couldn't lead a vampire to a blood bank."

But the ultimate falsity of the quota system was proved by the treatment given to the women's, black, and youth caucuses in Miami. Rather than drawing strength from these newly-liberated groups for his final push to the nomination, McGovern brushed them out of the way like so much leftover paper decoration. The newly-established black leaders claimed they were being ignored, and threatened to bolt to Shirley Chisholm or to sit out the campaign. The National Youth Caucus, a McGovern front, was embarrassed by its candidate's sudden indifference to its carefully prepared challenge to the somewhat mature Connecticut delegation. The women's caucus was stung by McGovern's reversals on its South Carolina challenge and on abortion reform; these political sex objects reacted like lovers betrayed. "The miserable fact was that the women's caucus was not a caucus in any meaningful sense," wrote Germaine Greer, "they were in Miami as cards in McGovern's hands, to be led or discarded as he wished—not as players at the table."

VI

It is troubling that a conception of democratic participation which is far more concerned with the demands of the political activist than it is with the needs of the ordinary citizen has gained such favor among liberals and Democrats. The McGovern commission reforms were clearly a product of this outlook, which in turn was a product of the ideological currents that arose in the New Left in the 1960's. These included the notions that the average American had been brainwashed by the Establishment and was tainted by racism. Neither he nor his indigenous leaders could be fully trusted to make the best decisions for himself or the nation. Political decision-making had to be shifted into the hands of those who by virtue of superior education and the possession of "conscience" —an absolute moral quality never affected by the social interests of those it graced—could give some civilized shape to the malleable politics of the masses. Participatory democracy, as defined by the new politicians, meant in practice the opening of political institutions to greater influence for the militant, activist liberal. It meant restricting the influence of public officials, the labor leadership, and others whose strength was based on their ability to represent the mundane interests of their constituents.

The election of 1972 has demonstrated that the "democratization" of the Democratic party under the guidance of such notions has only served to make it less representative of the interests and wishes of the majority of Americans than it has ever been before. For a majority party in the United States—especially if it is, as the Democrats have traditionally been, a party of change —faces a particular difficulty: that of drawing together a variety of potentially hostile racial, economic, cultural, and regional elements into a more or less united front against the vast power of corporate conservatism. In many respects the requirements of a coalition party, which must serve as a mechanism for brokerage among various interests, run counter to the plebiscitarian and individualistic currents that have long nourished both liberalism and radicalism in this country. The ethos of the New Politics in particular is hostile to the very idea of such a party. It has raised the social experience of its own affluent, educated constituency to what is, if not a world view, then at least a powerful conviction about the future of American politics. In this view, most of the "old" social problems which produced a politics of bread-and-butter self-interest are solved by the new affluence, or are well on their way to solution. The old interest groups—save perhaps for the blacks—are therefore superfluous. New forces are arising, not out of earthly needs, but out of the desires of those who have transcended such needs and are motivated only by the wish to do good.

But of course these new forces themselves constitute an interest group which differs from the "old" interest groups chiefly in its refusal to acknowledge the degree to which it hungers for political power and patronage. Unless steps can now be taken to restore the disaffected and disenfranchised elements of the Democratic party to influence, the party will remain in the control of this new interest group, and the Democrats will become the voice of an affluent minority speaking for and responsive to no one but itself.

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The Question of War Crimes

Joseph W. Bishop, Jr.

IN THE last few years the American public has been buried by a Vesuvian eruption of intellectual sludge on the subject of war crimes. Much of it has been produced by the likes of Jane Fonda and the Brothers Berrigan, but some of it comes from people whose legal credentials are fairly imposing. According to Professor Richard A. Falk of Princeton, "the United States Government is waging an illegal war of aggression by criminal means in Vietnam." Ramsey Clark, operating under the auspices of an organization whose point of view and purpose are sufficiently described by its name, the "International Commission of Inquiry into United States War Crimes," strongly implies, first, that the United States engaged in a deliberate effort to destroy the system of dikes in North Vietnam and, second, that all persons responsible for such bombing are war criminals. Mr. Clark, who is said by many people to be a better lawyer than Miss Fonda, did not, so far as I know, use the words "war crime." But he accused the United States of "inhuman behavior" in Vietnam and said that the bombing was "without justification." Bombing without military justification is in my opinion, and presumably in Mr. Clark's, a violation of the law of war—i.e., a war crime. When such language and opinions are put forth by the Milbank Professor of International Law at Princeton and a former Attorney General of the United States, I think that it is in order to examine the law of war and to explain what a war crime is, and also what it is not.

The subject is complex and sometimes obscure, but I think its essentials can be expounded with tolerable clarity and brevity. In trying to do so, I shall make no attempt to say what is immoral—not because I believe morality unimportant, but because my views on it are entitled to no more weight than Jane Fonda's, or Richard M. Nixon's, or yours. Professor Falk and others of his school frequently seem to use "illegal" and "immoral" interchangeably. A casebook specimen of this sort of reasoning is contained in a review of Telford Taylor's *Nuremberg and Vietnam*. The writer, starting with a declaration that the war in Vietnam "is a horrendous moral evil, a criminal undertaking of the most serious sort," proceeds to denounce Professor Taylor because "like almost all lawyers, he is most at ease when reasonably precise, reasonably well-established rules and conventions happen to be available. . . . Taylor embraces a very limited and morally unattractive notion of what constitutes a war crime."

While I do not agree with all of Professor Taylor's conclusions, I plead guilty to sharing his point of view. Law and morality are not and, in the present imperfect state of man, cannot be coextensive. Law means, or should mean, a standard on which there is general (although rarely, if ever, universal) agreement and, more than that, a standard whose violation may subject the violator to known or knowable sanctions. I emphasize again that what I propose to do in this piece is not to make moral judgments but to describe international *law*—the rules which most nations have agreed, whether by treaty or as a matter of custom, to obey and enforce.

THE idea that some methods of warfare are illegal is comparatively modern. As any reader of the Old Testament, Thucydides, Caesar, or Livy knows, ancient history is full of appalling chronicles of rapine, pillage, and massacre—some of it not merely permitted but practically mandatory under contemporary notions of morality. There was, of course, much philosophical discussion of "natural law" and condemnation of unnecessary barbarity, but the actual, effective law on the subject was tersely summed up by that eminent jurist, Marcus Tullius Cicero: *Silent leges inter arma* ("Laws are silent amid arms"). When Marcus Crassus put a definitive end to Spartacus's revolt by crucifying 6,000 captive slaves along the road from Capua to Rome, it would not have occurred to Cicero or anyone else to call him a criminal; the Senate decreed him a triumph. The Romans were probably the cruelest of ancient peoples, but even the Athenians and Spartans saw nothing immoral, much less illegal, in killing or enslaving the population of a conquered city.

The savagery of medieval warfare was not restrained by anything properly describable as

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law, although there was a certain deference to ideas of chivalry and Christian duty. But chivalry operated principally for the benefit of the well-born and rich; nobles and knights could be held for ransom and thus were far more valuable alive than dead. Two passages in the *Chronicles* of Jean Froissart illustrate the point that the mercy of the Middle Ages was based more on prudential than humanitarian considerations. After that terrible new weapon, the longbow, had destroyed the French army at Crécy,

> among the English pillagers and irregulars, Welsh and Cornishmen armed with long knives . . . went out after the French . . . and, when they found any in difficulty, whether they were counts, barons, knights or squires, they killed them without mercy. Because of this, many were slaughtered that evening regardless of their rank. It was a great misfortune and the King of England was afterward very angry that none had been taken for ransom, for the number of dead lords was very great.

In other words, the royal outrage was largely economic. Other considerations were also at work. When Calais, after a long and stubborn siege, surrendered, the same king, Edward III, was so enraged against the citizens that he proposed to give them no quarter. Sir Walter Manny (who seems really to have been a very gentle, as well as a very gallant, knight) talked him out of it with an argument which to this day underlies much of the international law of war:

> "My lord, you may well be mistaken, and you are setting a bad example for us. Suppose one day you want us to defend one of your fortresses, we should go less cheerfully if you have these people put to death, for then they would do the same to us if they had the chance." This argument did much to soften the King's heart, especially when most of his barons supported it.

The concept of *law* which limits the freedom of belligerents is usually traced to 17th- and 18th-century jurists like Grotius and Pufendorf. By the time of the American Revolution, both British and American military courts were trying violators (usually, of course, belonging to the other side) of what had by then become the customary law of war, the "practice of civilized nations." Grotius and the other fathers of international law had based their arguments in large part on moral, and even theological, considerations, but Gibbon, an 18th-century rationalist, if not a cynic (and no friend of Christianity), still saw the law of war as founded on convenience:

> The laws of war, that restrain the exercise of national rapine and murder, are founded on two principles of substantial interest: the knowledge of the permanent benefits which may be obtained by a moderate use of conquest and a just apprehension lest the desolation which we inflict on the enemy's country may be retaliated on our own.

Whatever its impulse, codification of the customary law of war began in the 19th century. A landmark was General Order 100 of April 24, 1863, "Instructions for the Government of the Armies of the United States in the Field," drafted by Professor Francis Lieber of Columbia (himself a soldier in the Napoleonic wars, with sons in both the Union and Confederate armies) and put into effect by Abraham Lincoln. Lieber's code, of course, had no binding effect on other nations, but it summarized, clarified, and improved the rules which most of the countries of Europe at least professed to respect, and is a direct ancestor of the treaties now in force.

The modern law of war has two sources: treaties and custom. The major treaties are the Hague Regulations of 1907 and the Geneva Conventions of 1949 (which, in the light of World War II, revised the Geneva Conventions of 1929), especially those relating to prisoners of war, the wounded and sick, and the protection of civilians. The signatories to the treaties, who include practically every nation in the world, are bound to obey and enforce their provisions. But there are many problems on which they do not touch, such as the use of nuclear weapons; they do not apply to some types of hostilities, and their application to others may be doubtful; and they are full of deliberate ambiguities. Hence a gratifying and unusual weight is sometimes accorded to the views of learned commentators, both on the meaning of the treaties and on the customary law in areas not covered by the treaties. Authority on such questions is also to be found in the manuals published by many nations for the guidance of their own forces (such as Part III of the British Manual of Military Law, The Law of War on Land, and the United States Department of the Army Field Manual 27-10, the Law of Land Warfare) and the decisions of domestic courts, such as the Supreme Court of the United States and the British Privy Council.* These last two, of course, to the extent that they go beyond mere restatement of the treaties, are more persuasive in their own countries, but they certainly rank as precedent even in foreign countries. Contrary to the impression created by so many politicians and journalists, few of whom

* The authorities on which I have chiefly relied in this article include the texts of Hague Convention No. IV of 1907 and the Geneva Conventions of 1949, particularly those relating to prisoners of war and the protection of civilian persons in time of war; Oppenheim, *International Law* (8th ed., 1955); Winthrop, *Military Law and Precedents* (2d ed., 1895); McDougal & Feliciano, *Law and Minimum World Public Order* (1961); United States Department of the Army Field Manual 27-10, *Law of Land Warfare* (1956); various opinions of the Supreme Court of the United States, notably *Ex parte* Quirin, 317 U.S. 1 (1942) and *In re* Yamashita, 327 U.S. 1 (1946); and a recent and comprehensive survey, Paust, *My Lai and Vietnam: Norms, Myths, and Leader Responsibility*, 57 Military Law Review 99 (1972).

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seem to have read either document, the Nuremberg Charter and Judgment added very little to the law of war (as distinct from "crimes against peace" and "crimes against humanity"); all but three of those who were sentenced at Nuremberg (and all but one, Streicher, of those executed) were found guilty of acts which in 1939 were universally recognized as war crimes—as the Charter described them: "murder, ill-treatment, or deportation to slave labor or for any other purpose of civilian population of or in occupied territory; murder or ill-treatment of prisoners of war or persons on the seas; killing of hostages; plunder of public or private property; wanton destruction of cities, towns, or villages; or devastation not justified by military necessity."

Probably the only rule of customary law, not embodied in the treaties, upon which all or almost all scholars and governments would agree is that the amount of force employed by a belligerent against the enemy should not exceed that which it reasonably believes necessary to the achievement of some legitimate military goal—which is often an exceedingly difficult question of fact. The massive bombings of Hamburg and Frankfurt, although they necessarily inflicted enormous suffering on civilians, were not, in my opinion, war crimes, for the RAF had no other way to knock out such legitimate targets as arms factories, submarine pens, and transportation networks. But many people, including me, think that the bombing of Dresden fell into a different category, because the German armies had by that time collapsed, and the bombing did little or nothing to hasten the end of the war. The bombings in Vietnam undoubtedly had the military purpose of destroying enemy troops and supplies and interfering with their movement. Whether they were an excessive or "disproportionate" use of force, and therefore illegal, depends on whether those goals could have been achieved by less and more discriminating force—a military question which I am no more competent to decide than is Professor Falk or Mr. Clark. The fact that the bombing did not produce victory (except in the sense that North Vietnam and the Vietcong have not conquered South Vietnam) does not, of course, demonstrate that it was an unjustifiable use of force. A general does not become a war criminal because he loses a bloody battle, even if he had small hope of winning it.

The treaties do, however, clearly and categorically prohibit many acts—such as the torture or killing of prisoners of war—even in circumstances in which those acts could be argued to serve an important military purpose. These categorical prohibitions, it must be admitted, are of a somewhat elemental sort, condemning acts which offend the morality of practically all people and governments. It can, of course, be argued that the law of war ought, for example, to forbid many means of destruction which it does not now forbid. But nations, if they are willing to resort to violence at all, have been reluctant to place narrow limits on the kinds of violence which they can employ—especially on weapons in which they think they have an advantage over potential foes. Cobras would advocate the outlawing of hooves, claws, and cutting teeth, but would denounce in the strongest terms a proposal to outlaw venom.

It is thus possible in many or most cases to say with some precision what the law of war is and therefore what acts are war crimes. If the law of war is not as clear as, say, the Uniform Commercial Code, it compares very favorably with the Sherman and Clayton Acts.

As WITH all law, and especially international law, enforcement is the toughest problem. Protest, the "appeal to world opinion," though constantly resorted to by all belligerents, and possibly useful as propaganda, has never proved very effective in forcing the enemy to stop doing whatever it is the protester is protesting about. Reprisal—an act which would itself be illegal if it were not in retaliation for a prior violation by the other side—is a two-edged weapon, with a tendency to invite counter-reprisals, and has not been much used in modern times. (But the fear of reprisal may operate as a deterrent; it probably accounts for the fact that nobody used gas in World War II.) The Geneva Conventions forbid reprisals against prisoners of war or noncombatants.

The remaining method of enforcement is trial and punishment of those who violate the laws of war. Such trials have usually taken place in the courts of the victors. (The commentators agree that a war criminal can be tried by any sovereign which has physical custody of him, but nations have rarely shown much interest in trying crimes of which they were not the victims.) Many such trials were held after World War II, some before International Tribunals, composed of judges appointed by the victors, in Nuremberg and Tokyo, and some in the courts, usually military, of the United States, Great Britain, France, Russia, and many other nations.

Although I think that the great majority of the resulting convictions were just, the fairness of a trial in such a court must necessarily be suspect. Moreover, this method of enforcement is available only when there *is* a victor. When a war ends inconclusively, as the Korean war ended and the Vietnam war appears to be ending, neither side is likely to try war criminals in its custody, for fear that the other will retaliate—by fabricating charges if necessary—against its own prisoners. Ideally, of course, war crimes would be tried in an impartial international tribunal. But no such tribunal exists, and I find it extremely difficult to imagine one whose impartiality the United States and North Vietnam, Israel and

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Egypt, Pakistan and Bangladesh, Russia and China, would all be willing to trust.

Thus, at the present time, it seems to me that the most realistic prospect for punishing war criminals is by trial in the courts of the accused's own country. All of the Geneva Conventions obligate each signatory power to search for persons alleged to have committed "grave breaches" of those Conventions and to "bring such persons, regardless of their nationality, before its own courts." There is still too little precedent for such enforcement of the law of war. I know of no instance in which North Vietnam or any other totalitarian government has ever accused a member of its own forces of a violation of the Geneva Conventions or any other war crime. But the most recent figures I have been able to find show that, as of April 1971, American courts-martial had tried 117 servicemen, and convicted 60, on charges of murdering civilians in Vietnam; an unknown, but probably larger, number had been tried for lesser offenses, such as rape and robbery, against civilians. Murder and other violence against the persons of noncombatants or captured enemies violate the Geneva Conventions, but they are also, of course, violations of the Uniform Code of Military Justice and have been charged as such. The main practical difference is that trial by court-martial for a violation of the Code guarantees the accused procedural protections and appellate review to which he might not be entitled if he were tried by a military commission for a war crime.

Some of the acquittals were probably unjustified, and in at least one case, that of Captain Ernest Medina, the acquittal may have been based on the military judge's erroneous instruction that Medina had no responsibility for the My Lai massacre unless he had "actual knowledge" of it: the law, as laid down by the Supreme Court in General Yamashita's case, is that a commander is responsible for war crimes committed by his subordinates, if he knew *or should have known* that they were going on and failed to do what he could to prevent or punish them. It is also safe to assume that many war crimes committed by Americans have never been investigated, tried, or punished. The Pentagon has not shown much enthusiasm for investigating the possible failures of commanders at divisional and higher levels to take adequate measures to prevent and punish war crimes. Moreover, the Department of Justice seems to take the position that an honorably discharged serviceman cannot be tried for a war crime committed prior to his discharge. The Supreme Court did hold some years ago that such a discharged soldier could not be court-martialed for an ordinary offense—i.e., one which was not a war crime—committed prior to his discharge. But it had earlier held, in World War II, that a Nazi saboteur who was an American civilian could constitutionally be tried by a military commission for a war crime, and it did not overrule that decision. I am myself of the opinion (though I seem to be in the minority) that a discharged serviceman *can* be tried by a military court on a charge of violating the law of war. In any case, Congress could and should give the federal courts jurisdiction to try such cases: under the Geneva Conventions, in fact, the United States is obligated to "enact any legislation necessary to provide effective penal sanctions" for persons committing "grave breaches."

The record is thus very far from perfect. All that can be said is that it is a better record than that of any other nation in the world and that it lends a degree of credibility to the Pentagon's numerous orders and regulations which aim to prevent and punish war crimes by requiring report and investigation of such incidents and the training and indoctrination of the troops on the subject.

It is safe to say that in all wars the forces of all belligerents will violate the law of war to a greater or lesser extent. The difference, which is important, is one of degree and government policy. War crimes will only be wiped out when war itself is wiped out. Few, if any, nations seem to be prepared to take that step, and I am not impressed by the argument that the law of war is immoral, and ought to be abolished, because it legitimizes war. I very much doubt that any of the wars of the present century, great or little, would have been avoided if the Hague and Geneva Conventions had never been signed. The fighting in Vietnam has been unusually dirty, and the record of the American forces seems to me much worse than it was in World War II or the Korean war. The My Lai massacre was the worst atrocity to be charged against American troops since the Fort Pillow and Sand Creek massacres of 1864 (the former committed by Confederates against Union soldiers and the latter by a regiment of Colorado volunteers against Indians) and the Wounded Knee massacre of 1890. As the court-martial records show, and other evidence suggests, there have been many other incidents in which American soldiers have deliberately killed noncombatants and captive combatants, although I know of no substantial evidence that any of these episodes has been on a scale remotely approaching that of My Lai. The United States has also been guilty of some mistreatment of prisoners of war and of some degree of complicity in their mistreatment by the South Vietnamese, although both the United States and South Vietnam take the position that the Geneva Convention on POW's is fully applicable, and both permit the International Red Cross to inspect their POW camps for compliance with that Convention. There has certainly been some degree of command failure to take adequate measures to pre-

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vent and punish violations, although, on the evidence so far available, I am doubtful that such guilt is widespread or that it extends to commands above the brigade or division level. (The Peers Report, which, since the army apparently proposes no further courts-martial arising out of My Lai, should promptly be published, would presumably tell us more about this.)

THIS bad record is not palliated by the fact that, on the very substantial evidence which is now available, the record of North Vietnam and the Vietcong is much worse. The New York *Times*, which cannot be accused of chauvinist bias against them, has (to its credit) printed many eyewitness accounts of such incidents as the massacres of civilians at Hué (which seems to have involved about 3,000 victims), Duc Duc, and, most recently, An Loc. There have been countless similar episodes on a smaller scale, such as the very recent attacks on the refugee camps at Danang. It has been estimated that by 1969 North Vietnamese and Vietcong forces had deliberately killed 25-30,000 noncombatants, in order to spread terror, deter cooperation with the government, and encourage cooperation with themselves. The number must have greatly increased, especially since the start of North Vietnam's 1972 offensives. Indirect, but convincing, confirmation of these estimates is furnished by the way in which civilian refugees in South Vietnam have voted with their feet, which is the only effective method of voting in that part of the world. When they flee from an area of combat, they always flee away from the North Vietnamese, never to territory occupied by them, which strongly suggests that these experienced observers fear the North Vietnamese more than they fear the Thieu regime.

There is less evidence of North Vietnamese violation of the Geneva Prisoner of War Convention, principally because North Vietnam takes the position that that treaty is inapplicable to the war in Indochina and refuses to allow inspection by the International Red Cross or any other neutral agency or to obey other provisions of the treaty, such as those relating to prompt notification of the names of captives and the right of prisoners to receive and send mail. This position was originally based on the contention that there was no armed conflict between signatories, since the war was purely a civil war within South Vietnam, in which no North Vietnamese forces were engaged. What justification was later adduced I do not know and cannot imagine. The *purpose* of that government's refusal to obey the treaty was presumably to increase American concern for the prisoners and thus increase pressure to accept North Vietnam's terms for releasing them. Upon the available evidence, I do not share Ramsey Clark's trustful confidence, based on supervised interviews with selected prisoners who remained in North Vietnam's custody, that that government was, in fact, obeying the Convention. But I emphasize again that the atrocities of the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong, however numerous and bloody, do not excuse war crimes by United States forces—and, in fact, no such claim has been made by any responsible person.

It is curious to note that in none of the voluminous publications by Professor Falk, Professor Noam Chomsky, *et al.*, on war crimes in Vietnam do I find any clear indication that anyone except the Americans and South Vietnamese has committed any crimes. Nowhere in the 590 pages of *Crimes of War*, edited by Professors Falk, Robert Jay Lifton, and Gabriel Kolko,* do I find any reference to Hué or Duc Duc. About the closest Professor Falk comes to raising this indelicate topic is this: "Some may say that war crimes have been committed by both sides in Vietnam. . . . Such a contention needs to be evaluated, however, in the overall context of the war, especially in relation to the identification of which side is the victim of aggression and which side is the aggressor." In other words, it is all right for belligerents whom Professor Falk believes to be the victims of aggression to commit war crimes. Elsewhere he reinforces this reasoning by arguing that guerrillas like the Vietcong (or, presumably, Al Fatah or the Irish Republican Army) have "no alternative other than terror to mobilize an effective operation." Professor Chomsky, a subtler casuist, says that if the international law of war permits the tactics employed by the United States and other governments, but not those of the guerrillas, then that law is of "no moral force or validity." It follows that if the North Vietnamese or the Vietcong direct artillery, mortar, or machine-gun fire at columns of refugees, the act is legal, and moral, since it serves the Good Cause by creating confusion and traffic blocks behind the lines of the South Vietnamese.

It is true that the treaties, as they now stand, prohibit many of the tactics employed in what the countries which Professor Falk calls "socialist" call "wars of national liberation," which mean insurrections within the territory of one country, more or less openly supported (by the furnishing of troops, arms, and sanctuary) by a second power friendly to the insurgents but ostensibly not at war with the first sovereign. The insurgents typically do not wear uniforms or carry arms openly; their object is so far as possible to make themselves indistinguishable from the civilian population so that it is difficult to resist or attack them without endangering noncombatants. They typically resort to assassination and other acts of terror against noncombatants. Such a tactical doctrine violates the first and most basic principle of the Hague and Geneva Conventions, which is that combatants are so far

* Random House (1971), $8.95.

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as possible to be distinguished from noncombatants. And it must be conceded that the guerrillas would have small chance of success if they followed the rules of those treaties. None of the signatory governments, whether totalitarian or democratic, had any desire to facilitate domestic insurrections, at least in their own countries.

The law of war, then, as it now exists, makes criminal most of the tactics which offer to guerrillas their only chance of success. If there are no legal or political means by which the insurgents can pursue their ends—that is, when there are no honest elections, no honest courts, and no constitutional safeguards against oppression—they cannot fairly be expected to obey the rules prescribed by those in power. In their case, the law of war, to the extent that it applies to them, seems to me in part unjust. It does not follow that that law should be changed to permit them deliberately to kill the innocent in order to create terror or seize innocent hostages in order to extract concessions. But here I find myself straying into a moral question and had better desist, if only because the international law of war has little to do with most of the terrorists.

The activities of organizations like the IRA or the various Palestinian terrorist groups are neither protected nor condemned by the law of war; it does not apply to them at all, even if they are receiving support from an outside government, or even if they are agents of that government. They are simply violators of the criminal law of the country in which they act, to be tried and punished in whatever way that law prescribes. If they can raise the violence to a level at which it can be called "an armed conflict not of an international character occurring in the territory of one of the High Contracting Parties," as the Vietcong did and the IRA has very nearly done, the Geneva Conventions give them some basic protection—if they surrender or are placed *hors de combat* by wounds they may not be subjected to "murder, mutilation, cruel treatment, and torture" or executed "without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples"—although it is not easy to think of any guarantee which is not dispensed with by some arguably civilized peoples. They are certainly not entitled to be treated as prisoners of war, and they can be tried for violating the local law. Even if there is an armed conflict betwen nations party to the treaties, the irregulars are entitled to no more protection than this, unless they wear some sort of insignia recognizable at a distance, carry arms openly, and themselves obey the laws of war—which, of course, they almost never do. During Dr. Sukarno's "confrontation" with Malaysia, Osman Bin Haji Mohammed Ali, and another member of the Indonesian army, wearing sports shirts and slacks, planted a satchel charge in a Singapore bank and killed a couple of tellers. The Privy Council, assuming that there was an "armed conflict" between the two countries and that the Prisoner of War Convention was applicable, held them outside its protection; they could be, and were, tried for murder and sentenced to death by an ordinary Malaysian criminal court. (I have a doubt, which may seem rather technical, about the rightness of the British judges' holding; as I read the treaty, if the defendants were members of Indonesia's regular armed forces, they were entitled to treatment as POW's, although they could still have been tried for a war crime.) North Vietnamese regulars, at any rate, are entitled to treatment as prisoners of war, and the United States and its allies (but, as already noted, not North Vietnam) take the position that the fighting in Indochina was an armed conflict between signatories, which plainly it was, and that the Geneva Conventions are applicable in their entirety.

Professor Falk, of course, asserts that the United States was waging a war of aggression in Vietnam. From this he draws two conclusions: first, the "policy-makers responsible for the war during its various stages" are war criminals; second, that anyone who agrees with his finding, or ought to agree with it, i.e., everyone, has not only a "duty of conscience" but a *legal* right, arising from international law and superior to the provisions of domestic law, "to resist participation in and support of that war effort by every means at his disposal." Presumably the means at his disposal include refusal to serve in the armed forces or to pay federal taxes; I do not know whether Professor Falk means also to include burning Selective Service offices and bombing ROTC buildings. I have grave doubts about the validity of this reasoning and graver doubts about its premise.

The Nuremberg Charter and Judgment are undoubtedly precedent for the proposition that the "initiation or waging of a war of aggression" violates international law. But I take a dim and skeptical view of the application of this principle. The difficulty is that Adolf Hitler was about the only ruler since Frederick the Great who scarcely bothered to claim that he was the victim of aggression. Even North Korea advanced some sort of theory that its invasion of South Korea was launched in self-defense. The Charter of the United Nations, of course, recognizes the right of self-defense, including collective self-defense. (Some countries go farther; China, for example, apparently takes the position that it is proper to initiate a "just" war.) There is no consensus whatever as to whether Arabs or Israelis are aggressors, and the question is certainly no less complex in Southeast Asia than in the Middle East. Large volumes could be, and have been, filled with arguments—some by reputable schol-

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ars—on the question. It is hard for me to see how anyone much above the intellectual level of Jane Fonda can take seriously the idea that Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon, and all their "policy-making" subordinates, intended to emulate Hitler by starting and waging a war of aggression. I think it far more probable that they thought they were applying the lessons of Munich and Korea, that they were international policemen promoting peace by deterring aggression. Indeed, my objection to United States policy in Vietnam is that it has been based far more on morality than on a prudent appraisal of this country's selfish interests. The evidence simply does not support Professor Falk's verdict of guilty. I would myself be unwilling to prosecute the rulers of North Vietnam on such a charge, although I regard the case against them as stronger than that against the American Presidents and their advisers.

The concept that everyone has a duty to resist a war which Professor Falk finds aggressive and immoral is often expanded, by reasoning still fuzzier than his, to include the notion of mass guilt; every citizen of the United States, except the saints and martyrs of the anti-war movement, is guilty of the war crime at My Lai; the unfortunate Lieutenant Calley was merely a scapegoat. To a lawyer, at least, this is nonsense, and pernicious nonsense at that. A war crime, like any other crime, requires *personal* dereliction. A military commander, whether General Westmoreland or Captain Medina, is responsible for crimes committed by his subordinates if he ordered them or if he failed to do what he reasonably could to prevent and punish them, and not otherwise. Likewise, a soldier is under no duty to obey an unlawful order; he has (as the Court of Military Appeals has frequently held) a duty to *disobey* one which an ordinary man would realize was unlawful, such as an order to kill a noncombatant or a captured enemy. In all of the reported convictions for such offenses it was pretty plain both that the accused knew that his act was illegal and that he could have refrained from it.

There have been many loud and eloquent assertions that American bombing in Vietnam was a war crime on a gigantic scale. But no treaty forbids aerial bombing, and the customary law condemns only bombing (or any other type of force) which is unrelated or disproportionate to the achievement of a military purpose. A bombardment (by airplanes, artillery, rockets, or mortars) whose sole or principal purpose is to kill noncombatants would be a war crime, precisely as My Lai was. But there is very little hard evidence against, and a good deal of evidence to support, the United States's contention that much effort was expended, and some peril incurred, to limit the risk that bombs would kill noncombatants or destroy non-military property. A military target cannot be protected from attack by the simple expedient of placing it in the middle of a civilian community, and I am profoundly skeptical of the claims by North Vietnam and its friends that American bombs usually hit only hospitals, schools, and homes for the aged. The evidence does not persuade me that the bombing in Vietnam was any more illegal than was the bombing of Germany, when bombs were dumber than they are now. I note with some interest that Senator McGovern, while denouncing the bombing in Vietnam as "immoral" and "probably one of the worst crimes in the history of the world," made a good deal of his excellent record as a bomber pilot over Germany.

In areas where the civilian population is under the control of a belligerent, the inevitable risk can be lessened by removing them from the vicinity of military targets, such as enemy troops, and areas of combat. But when the United States and South Vietnam did this, polemicists like Leonard Boudin concluded that "the forced 'relocation' of rural populations . . . [is], in all contexts [a] 'war crime.' . . ." He cites an article by Noam Chomsky in the *New York Review of Books*, an editorial in the *New Yorker*'s "Talk of the Town," and other authorities still less legal. It is magnificent, but it is not law. I infer that Mr. Boudin, although he is a lawyer and was writing in the *Harvard Law Review*, preferred to consult his emotions and his favorite tracts rather than his law library. Consulting my own library, I find that the Geneva Convention on the Protection of Civilians covers only those who are under the control of an *enemy* nation—aliens who are resident in its territory, and the inhabitants of areas conquered and occupied by its forces. The Hague and Geneva Conventions, and customary international law, in fact, encourage the evacuation of noncombatants from theaters of combat. The Secretary General of the United Nations in 1970 urged all belligerents "to ensure that civilians are removed from, or kept out of areas . . . likely to place them in jeopardy or to expose them to the hazards of warfare." But I expect that Mr. Boudin and the *Harvard Law Review* will henceforth be cited to prove that forced evacuation from such areas is a war crime.

Brief comments are perhaps in order on other accusations which have been made with particular frequency and emotion. The use of napalm, for example, may be immoral, but it is not illegal—subject to the usual caveat that there must be military justification for its use. Neither treaty nor customary international law forbids the use of fire. Greek fire, whose secret the Byzantines managed to preserve for centuries, goes back at least to the 7th century and helped repel more than one barbarian invasion. In modern wars belligerents (including North Vietnam and the Vietcong) have frequently em-

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ployed flamethrowers. Likewise, neither treaty nor customary law forbids the mining of a belligerent's territorial waters, as in Haiphong harbor. (Such mining is not a "blockade," a broader concept which may include the interception, destruction, or capture of neutral vessels on the high seas.) I do not find convincing the allegations that the United States deliberately attempted to destroy North Vietnam's flood-control dikes, if only because it seems obvious that such a campaign would have produced far more damage than the North Vietnamese could show to Ramsey Clark or anyone else. But even intentional bombing of dikes and dams is not *per se* illegal: when the RAF bombed the Mohne and Eder dams in 1942, in order to flood an important industrial area, only Dr. Goebbels called it a war crime.

I expect that because I say that many acts which cause great suffering are not illegal I shall be accused of callous indifference to morality and humanity. I shall, in effect, be accused of talking like a lawyer. Indeed, I would not be very much surprised if my attempt to discuss the question with as little emotion as possible were treated as itself immoral, if not criminal. The international law of war, as it now exists, is undoubtedly very imperfect. Its most fundamental rule, which is that combatants are so far as possible to be distinguished from noncombatants, in effect outlaws the sort of guerrilla warfare which has become common in many parts of the world and makes unlawful belligerents of those who engage in it. By the same token, it permits the use of modern weapons which can reach military targets far in the enemy's rear but which necessarily endanger the innocent. It has never restricted the freedom of sovereigns to mistreat their own citizens. Such as it is, its enforcement depends largely on the willingness of governments to discipline and punish their own forces—a willingness which has only begun to develop in some countries and of which there is no discernible trace in others. All that can be said is that it is better than no law: I think it probable that much suffering has been prevented in the last sixty years by the existence of a body of law which nearly all governments profess to respect and which most are reluctant to violate openly and on a large scale.

The prospects are not bright for changes in the conventional law of war which would mitigate the savagery of "wars of national liberation." It is nearly impossible to imagine even rudimentary rules by which guerrillas and terrorists would feel themselves bound, and equally difficult to imagine governments conceding them any greater rights than they have now. Some improvement may come from better technology —more accurate weapons, like "smart" bombs, which can attack military targets with less danger to nearby civilians. Above all, much more can and should be done, especially by countries like the United States, which have a free press and a relatively enlightened public conscience, to prevent and punish war crimes by their own forces—regardless of whether there is any hope of reciprocity.

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Books in Review

Out in the Cold

THE HIDDEN INJURIES OF CLASS. By RICHARD SENNETT and JONATHAN COBB. *Knopf. 275 pp. $6.95.*

Reviewed by SARA SANBORN

CLASS is like a fur coat—soft and warm to wrap around you if you have it, a constant goad and affront if you're one of those left out in the cold. Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb set out to discover the impact of a class society on those near the bottom by conducting 150 in-depth interviews with working men and women in Boston. The plumbers, shop foremen, electricians, and janitors whom they spent over 400 hours interviewing expressed a variety of feelings about their place in society—anger, pain, humiliation, but also, surprisingly often, acceptance. One of the most interesting and poignant facts of life in America is that working people often assume personal responsibility for their social position. Even while many of those interviewed felt that "I never had a chance," they also finally declared, "I didn't have what it takes," or "I didn't have it upstairs."

The juxtaposition of a class society and an ethos of individualism and personal development puts the burden squarely on the worker. Old notions of Social Darwinism still linger over the field: those who deserve to get to the top will rise, and those left behind are where they belong. The resulting fracture in self-esteem may actually be compounded by a rise in social status. The manual worker who achieves a lower-echelon white-collar job finds himself bored and frustrated by "paper-pushing." He then castigates himself for not having what it takes to profit from his "rise" and his "new opportunities."

Richard Sennett (who did the actual writing of this book) does not explore the problem, yet it is clear that mobility in a hierarchical situation must always be accompanied by self-doubt. If a man has staved off social contempt for years by asserting the virile superiority of those who work with their muscles, how is he to feel when he finds himself behind a desk? The meat-cutter interviewed here who won a job as a bank clerk is pleased with his achievement, but also contemptuous of his colleagues, and hence, by extension, of himself for joining their organization: "The other fellows, because they got an education, sneaks out early and comes in late."

The worker, in short, gets it coming and going; whether he rises in the social scale or fails to, he is liable to a perpetual crisis of self-respect.

Self-respect, the authors believe, is the name of the game, and "freedom" and "dignity" are its prizes. In America, both freedom and dignity are won by acquiring "badges of ability," publicly-acknowledged personal merits that make one stand out from the rest. Repeatedly the men and women who speak in this book express pain and resentment at being treated in their work as one of the faceless mass, at being "part of the woodwork," or "just Ricca the janitor." In an individualistic society they crave validation as human beings through personal recognition. Yet, cruelly, the authors note, "the few need the many: individuals exist only so long as a mass exists, a point of reference consisting of others who seem pretty much alike." In order for one to be legitimized as an individual, many must make up the contrasting woodwork. Thus efforts for social mobility and personal validity can also bring a crisis in "fraternity." The worker promoted to foreman must leave his fellows behind. It is likely that they will resent him, and he may quickly come to resent *them*, for now he is responsible for the quality of the "menials'" work, and they have a certain power to make or break him in the eyes of his superiors. Thus each is set against the others, as all struggle to acquire more badges of ability than the rest. A not uncommon response, the authors find, is that workers separate the "real" self, the loving, feeling, fraternal person, from the performing self. The foreman leaves at home (where his real life is lived) all the qualities that might lead him to sympathize with an erring subordinate and hence make himself vulnerable. He becomes, in a word, alienated.

But what of the New Affluence and the much-vaunted ability of workers in America to buy houses and cars, speedboats and summer cottages? Are not common patterns of consumption erasing class lines? Evidently not. Many of the workers interviewed for this book know that materially they are much better off than their Depression-era parents were. Many are earning $10,000 to $15,000 per year. Yet many, apparently, feel that they lack something tending toward freedom and dignity which the middle class enjoys, including those members of it who earn less than skilled craftsmen. That something might best be described as self-development. Part of the status accorded to professionals, the authors believe, arises from a perception on the part of others that these people have scope to develop all their own best qualities and then to give of their ripened personalities to others. The doctor, unlike the foreman, is free to engage all his refined sensibilities in his work. Said one woman, "It's not the money, see . . . if you could be in a position like that, at least nothing stands in the way of your doing good. . . ." It seems that the

SARA SANBORN, *a new contributor, is a young writer whose reviews and articles have appeared in the* Harvard Graduate School of Education Bulletin, *the* Boston Review of the Arts, *and elsewhere.*

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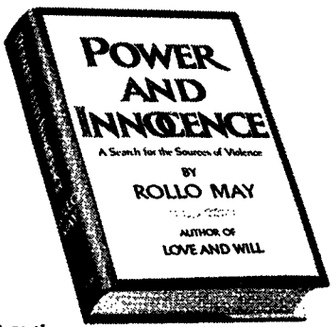

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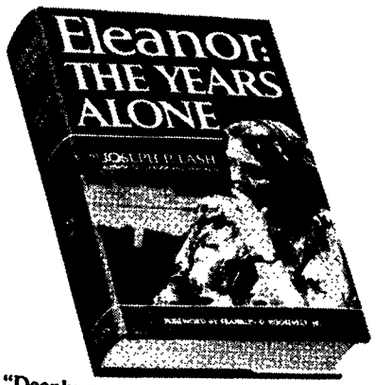

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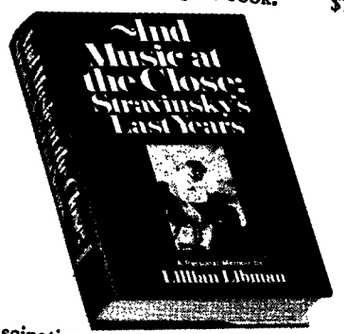

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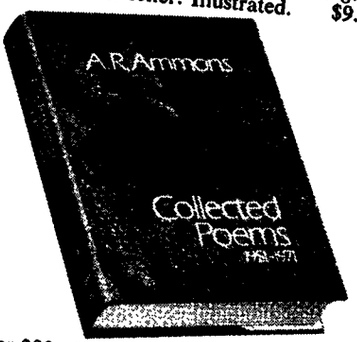

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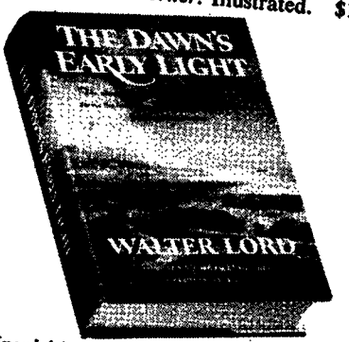

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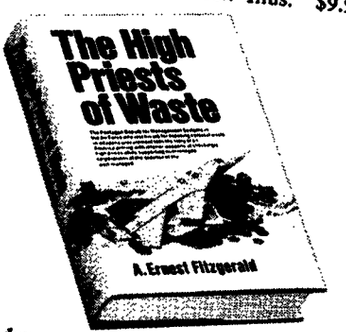

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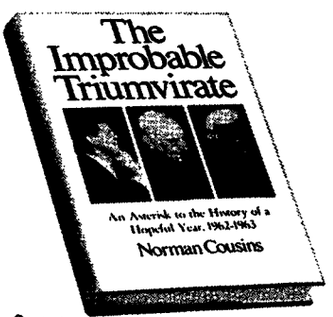

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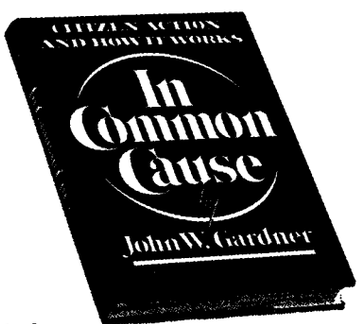

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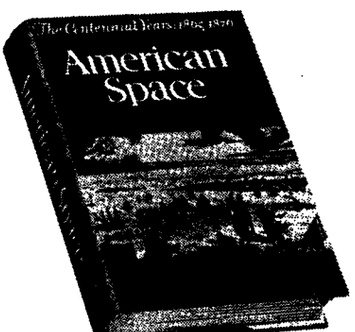

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longing for "creativity" and "autonomy" has spilled out of the middle-class encounter group into the larger society.

"To make something of yourself" has always been the first and great commandment of American society, and from the beginning the requirement has had overtones broader than the purely economic, although the authors of the present volume seem little aware of it. The ethos of aspiration and the cult of self-improvement are far older than mass industrial society in America and probably have a religious base. Although Richard Sennett glances once or twice at the class societies of the past, this book suffers from an acute limitation in its field of vision. Sennett properly locates the origins of the meritocratic ideal in the Enlightenment, when, ironically, it was seen as an *amelioration* of the injustices of class. The authors believe, however, that the Enlightenment thinkers fell into a fatally "flawed humanism" when they allowed dignity to wait upon evidence of individual worth, rather than ascribing it to human life *per se*. This notion, Sennett implies, was happily seized upon by the capitalist bourgeoisie to legitimate its own power.

In fact, class society is as old as Western civilization (and as broad), and so is the idea of advancement through personal worth, though this advancement once took place in the interstices of "the system" rather than being built into its guiding ideology. The ancient folk tales of the poor younger son (often considered "simple") who wins the princess and half the kingdom through his wits and his luck are the first Horatio Alger myths.

Daniel P. Moynihan has remarked that in the United States "equality" is achieved not by an imposed leveling, but by the diffusion downward of upper-class privileges. What is a luxury of the rich in one generation becomes a universal necessity in the next, and finally a publicly-acceded right. We can see this process working with everything from bathtubs to automobiles to college degrees. Its inevitable corollary is that everyone must aspire to the life-style of the upper classes: we must, all 200 million of us, crowd through the same funnel. Yet just as inevitable in this process is the infinite regress of the upper classes before the advancing mass. Does everyone have a high-school diploma? Then the best must get a B.A., a Ph.D., a post-doctoral fellowship. There are always new worlds to conquer. Indeed, social mobility in America is less well-represented by the old image of the ladder with its definite finishing point than by the endless children's song about the bear who went over the mountain, to see what he could see. "He saw another mountain, he saw another mountain."

For it is not only the working classes who are subject to injury in the perpetual scramble for self-legitimization. Sennett recognizes this in passing: "The position we take in this book is that everyone in this society, rich and poor, plumber and professor, is subject to a scheme of values that tells him he must validate the self in order to win others' respect and his own." If such a position is taken in the book it is taken only once and forgotten. By and large, Sennett and Cobb are not much interested in the injuries that the upper-middle class inflicts on the middle class, or that the intellectual class inflicts on everybody. But the craving for merit in the eyes of others is the same in every stratum, and money and education alone are no longer enough to provide it. You must also subscribe to the right magazines and hold the right political opinions. There is indubitably more "class" in making stained glass in your spare time than in driving a snowmobile. A whole book could be written on the competition for merit in the area of mental health —more spontaneous than thou, etc. There is even a certain amount of competition in some quarters over who is least competitive. The institutions of class are indeed cutting close to the source of self-esteem, as more and more qual-

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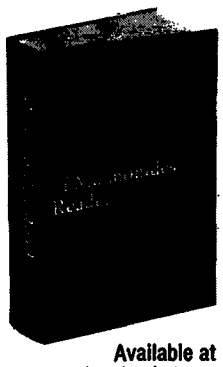

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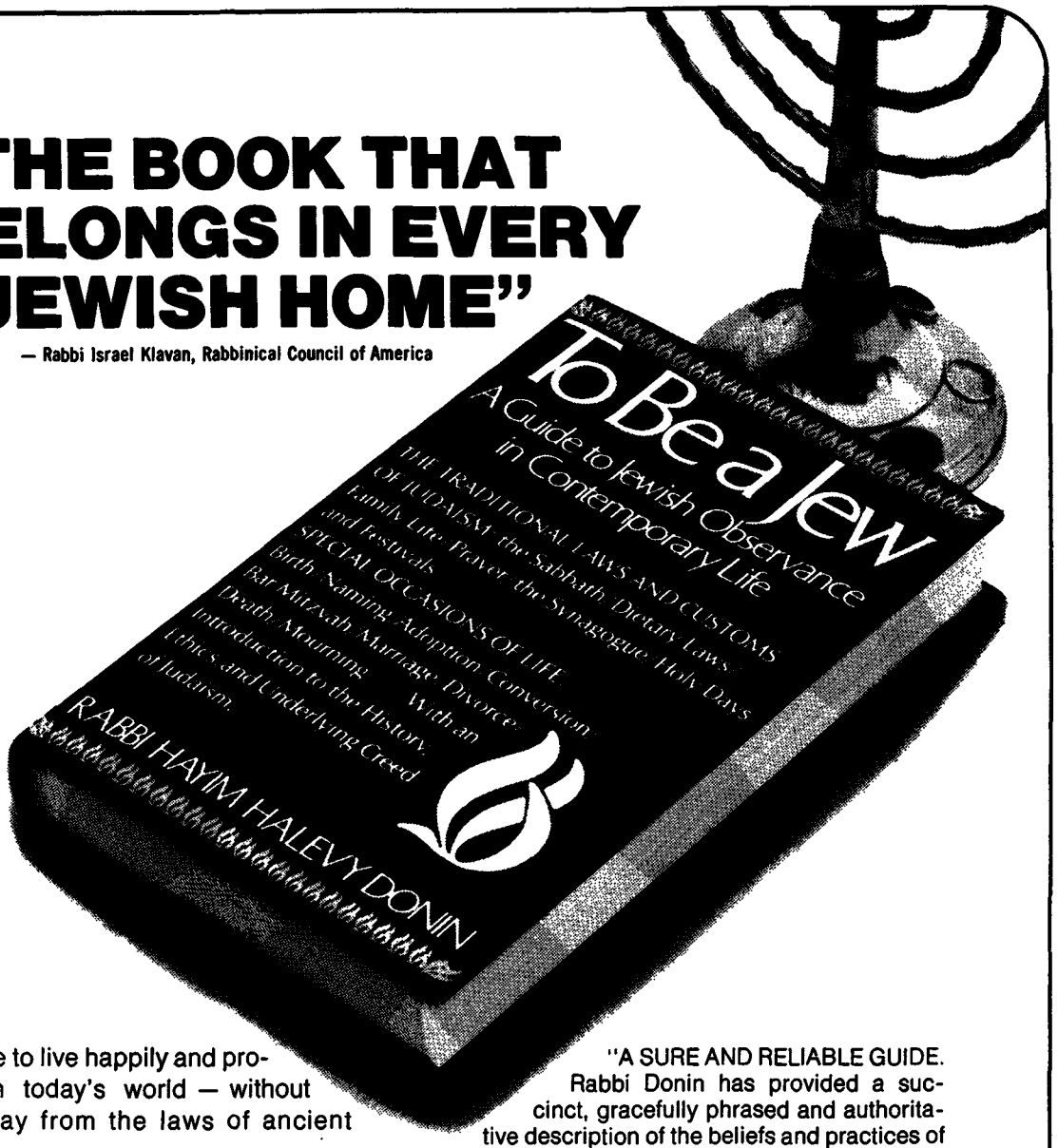
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ities of mind and personality become status symbols.

The people interviewed by Sennett and Cobb are aware of the demands that await them in the middle class. In a group interview, one woman astonishes and angers her friends by proclaiming that she (unlike them) wouldn't "die" if her daughter brought home a black boyfriend. As she implies that her friends are bigots —hence, lower-class—she looks to the academic interviewer for approval. Sennett understands the implications of this interview, but he fails to develop them at any length. In "A Note About the Authors," the book informs us that Jonathan Cobb and his wife live "with six other people in Dorchester, Massachusetts"; this pushing forward of the communal house looks uncommonly like a bid for personal validation against the mass of bourgeois others.

THE true tragedy of class today, just as it was in the eras of princely magnificence, is the wasting of resources on gifts for the ego. If everyone had enough, those who wanted to could be left to their search for validation. The authors would like to end the competition and its inevitable injuries by devaluing "individualism" and creating a classless society. But what such a society would look like, they are unable to tell us. There are no models anywhere in the world, Sennett unhappily concedes. Clearly those societies that proclaim themselves classless have only substituted political for social classes. The authors conclude that a truly classless society would be one in which nobody had the power to reward anybody for what he did. Presumably in such a society, nobody could have his book published, since this would constitute a badge of ability and hence a status gain against others.

Personal striving after validation seems to be an endemic condition of self-conscious man, not just a perversion of modern capitalism. The concepts of superior and inferior and a desire for one's self to be superior are as old as the race, and it seems probable that institutions of class are expressions of the human desire for legitimacy rather than a primary cause of it. Striving after personal justification has taken many forms in human history, but striving there has always been. This observation seems almost ludicrously elementary. But Sennett and Cobb, while they report acutely on the effects of the striving, give a shallow and sometimes unconvincing treatment of the causes.

It seems again excruciatingly obvious (yet apparently it is necessary to state) that human beings, except under the most nursery-like conditions, are not likely ever to achieve lives completely free of anxiety and wounds to self-esteem. But how can we lessen the pain which Sennett and Cobb chronicle, as well as the pains they don't mention? Modern society's contribution to anxiety is surely not the creation of class and the notion of better and worse, but the introduction of mobility, of possibility, including the possibility of failure. (The devaluation of religion and the host of simple virtues which offered the humble an alternate road to justification probably also enters in.) The best we can do now, it would seem, is not to eliminate the idea of personal validation (will men ever forget the notion of "good" and "bad?"), but to broaden it; not to wipe out the possibilities, but to multiply them.

Art and Nature

TIME OF NEED: FORMS OF IMAGINATION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. By WILLIAM BARRETT. *Harper & Row. 401 pp. $10.00.*

Reviewed by JOHN WAIN

WILLIAM BARRETT believes that in the headlong pursuit of technological advantage we have deserted our true nature and are increasingly dead to its directives. Those directives he reads in modern literature and art, the collective voice of the human imagination in our time.

However much it has been pushed to the margins of our social life, however much we may have—in the words of Lévi-Strauss —placed art on a reservation, it still hangs on by the skin of its teeth. Yet that survival has exacted a heavy price from the artists themselves. It required nothing less than a destruction of forms in order to make a prodigious return to the sources of art itself, back beyond the bourgeois phase of its history, which we now recognize to be that of realism. Modern artists have dared to enter once again that world of the imagination, more encompassing than the boundaries of realism, where their works struggle to live beside Easter Island and Stonehenge as well as Ingres and Courbet. Beyond the glut of documentary journalism, literature survives only where language and the word retain the primordial resonance they had in the sagas and myths of early man.

Mr. Barrett's book is written out of a belief that Western man has exhausted his dynamo, that the time of need is now. The pride which once drove us to place the human alongside the divine—even if in the process the divine must give way and crumble to dust—has turned into sickness and self-doubt. Man's journey away from the primitive began with the Enlightenment, which promised to rid him of superstition and fear. At the same time the scientific revolution began to put into his hands the keys of the physical world. He has, so far, used those keys only for robbery and blasphemy. It was all right as long as man could see himself as being in cahoots with God, but when in the 19th century this partnership dissolved, man looked round and found himself alone. The shock was a profound one, and with the passage of years the situation has grown no easier. Hence the phenomenon of nihilism, of which Mr. Barrett offers no formal definition but to which he reverts continually.

Nihilism is that state of intellectual and spiritual heebie-jeebies in which the human spirit defines itself against the void and realizes that there is nothing to stop the void from swallowing it. Since modern man carries at the back of his mind the suspicion that all his feverish activity is either random

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JOHN WAIN *is the well-known English novelist, poet, and critic.*

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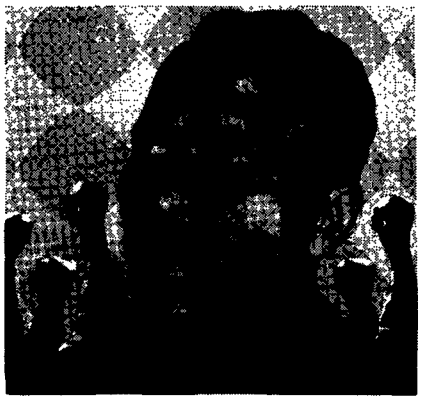

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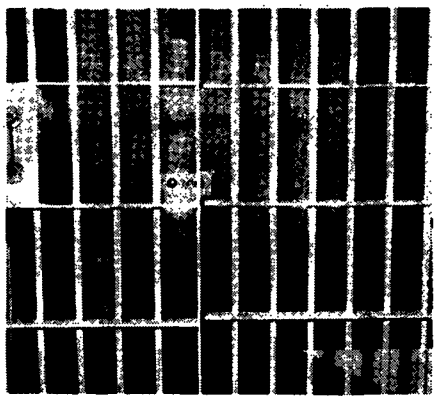

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competitiveness ("a blind man battering blind men") or an empty exercise of the unanchored will, urging itself on toward dissolution against a background of eternal night—since he carries within him this question, the art which speaks for him has made it a central concern. The characteristic modern artist either rubs our noses in the futility of human constructions (Beckett) or strives to set up some counter-principle that will hold us steady in the face of the fathomless threat. And on the whole Mr. Barrett is satisfied that he has identified this counter-principle. It is the "primal, primordial, primitive."

"The major problem of our time is the decay of the belief in personal immortality." The words are George Orwell's, but the thought is everyone's. The historical situation of the modern artist is that he has now finally moved from the notion of art against a background of eternity to the notion of art against a background of death. To some, the only response to the ultimate triumph of death will be silence, and perhaps in the non-statements of Samuel Beckett and the cut-up books of William Burroughs what we are hearing is a kind of silence which oddly persists in making a noise. Mr. Barrett says, kindly, of Beckett that he "seems to inch laboriously toward a dead end, from which nevertheless he—and his characters—are always reborn irresistibly like so many phoenixes from the ashes." This is because Beckett states his pessimistic loathing of life with "vitality, humor, and intense pathos." This would imply that style is a preserving ingredient, and indeed, earlier on in the book, Mr. Barrett has represented both Hemingway and, to some extent, Camus as holding this view. Life may be an empty game, but if we play it with style then we cannot complain that we have nothing; at least we have style. This of course is Yeats's view that "Hamlet and Lear are gay," restated in prose. So perhaps the spirit of man is not, after all, entirely naked; it can (as William Empson put it in one of his two or three famous poems) "learn a style from a despair."

STYLE, however, is not the only positive which Mr. Barrett discerns. There is another and more fundamental positive, which he defines at one point by invoking the myth of Deucalion and Pyrrha. These two survivors of the Flood were commanded to throw their mother's bones over their shoulders. They interpreted this, correctly, as referring to the stones that were lying on the ground; they threw them; they sprang up as men and women. The Earth as mother, the Earth as provider of life and source of the generations —here, Mr. Barrett sites the main argument of his book. He sees in the imaginative utterance of the past fifty years a hunger to be reunited with the "primal, primordial, primitive." In the Greek myth, stones came up as men and women; in Henry Moore's "Reclining Figure," the human form seems to be settling back into the loam, its features only faintly discernible, its contours worn into smoothness in the way that Nature works on stone.

Mr. Barrett follows this *leitmotif* through many books and authors. He sees it in Hemingway's preoccupation with the concrete, in the revolt of Camus from the abstractions of urban intellectual life and his kinship with "the world of the sea and the stars," in the blood-and-kinship rituals of Faulkner, in the mythopoeic imagination of Joyce. The display of examples is cumulative. It ends with a clear warning. We, as a species, are making for the first time a determined effort to cut free of Nature, to enclose ourselves in an envelope of technology from which we exclude the remnants of primitive consciousness within us. "To accomplish this," Mr. Barrett ends, "would be a step more audacious than the mere physical leap into space. It would probably be man's most daring adventure yet. Will it succeed? Art seems to say no."

That "no" is the last word in the book, as "yes" is the last in *Ulysses*. And with something like equal force. Beneath his reason-

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ableness and the moderate tone of his voice (very welcome in this bawling epoch), Mr. Barrett is uttering a strong warning. He wants to arrest the lemming-rush of modern man by the most effective means in his power, namely, by calling into testimony the collective voice of the imagination, man's own wise heart speaking against his foolish head.

On these terms, I find *Time of Need* true and moving. In matters of detail—sometimes quite large detail—I think it can be faulted. The choice of examples is, as Mr. Barrett himself says, necessarily random. But I think it should have included one or two, at least, of those writers whose defense against Nihilism is stated in the terms of this world, whose answer has not been transcendental but rooted in the nature of man as a social being. Pasternak in *Dr. Zhivago,* for instance, comes close to stating a satisfying doctrine of immortality in terms of the flowing river of the human race; his view is not in conflict with the official Communist view that the society transcends and includes the individual, but it is a sweeter, cleaner, stronger version of that view; it interprets history as something living rather than as the blind power-appetite of the party. An even more serious omission is the absence of any but the most tangential mention of D. H. Lawrence, who after all made one of the first complete and overt statements of the thesis that man must be true to the "primordial" in himself. Perhaps the anarchic and disturbed Lawrence jars uncomfortably with Mr. Barrett's personal view of England as "traditional, conservative, and unshaken in its institutional life over these troubled years." (As an Englishman I am glad that there is still somebody to whom we seem like that.) Again, Mr. Barrett's account of the quarrel between Sartre and Camus does not really succeed in clarifying the differences between them, as we might expect a philosopher to be able to do. But no book on a large scale is without some "looped and windowed raggedness." As a whole, *Time of Need* is thoroughly valuable. It is written with passion, lucidity, wisdom.

Tale of a Tycoon

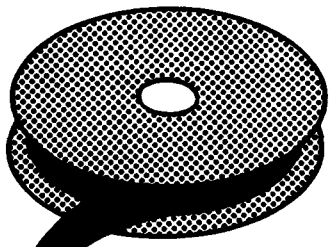
LING: THE RISE, FALL & RETURN OF A TEXAS TITAN. By STANLEY H. BROWN. *Atheneum. 308 pp. $7.95.*

Reviewed by ROGER STARR

IF THE name had not been grabbed off by others, this lucid and troubling book might profitably have been subtitled "Metamorphoses." It describes three mysterious changes in a man and in his institutions which take place before the reader's eye, but so subtly that one cannot determine exactly when each change occurred, what exactly happened, and above all why. And yet all these words are about something as prosaic as business, American business, in the few years between the early 1950's and the late 1960's.

At one point in *Ling,* its author, Stanley H. Brown, wonders whether the subject, James Ling, a Texan of German descent, would wish to rerun a certain business deal over again, as though life were a movie film capable of reversal and stop-action. The metaphor is more generally applicable. We see the Ling metamorphoses after they have taken place and wish they had been recorded on film so that they could be run over again, a little more slowly this time, that we may know precisely what happened and at what moment it happened. A little slower, please. No, still slower. It doesn't help much. We see Ling moving onto the screen, emerging from the navy as a Fireman, First Class, the product of an orphaned family in the impoverished Southwest of the Depression. He uses his navy training in electricity as the base for a small electrical-contracting business, wiring doorbells in the postwar Texas building boom. With the advantages of native shrewdness, hard spare-time study

ROGER STARR *is executive director of the Citizens' Housing and Planning Council of New York, Inc.*



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of electricity, electronics, and accountancy, accompanied by long hours of personal supervision, he builds his tiny enterprise into a highly efficient and quite profitable major-minor factor in the Southwest's electrical-contracting world, and among the nation's military electronic equipment manufacturers.

Ling at this early stage appears a sympathetic, if not particularly likable man. But at some point in the film—one cannot even tell which reel—we find him metamorphosing into someone quite different. His interest in the work he had been doing fades until he loses himself in fascination with the role that other people's money could play in making his company grow. We recognize the shift in interest, but cannot account for it. The author tells us that Ling himself succumbed to an irresistible urge (a) to get his enterprise listed in *Fortune* magazine's catalogue of the 500 largest industrial companies, and (b) to move it up the list as fast as possible. Whether this sufficiently explains Ling remains in doubt, no matter how often we rerun the film. Perhaps the metamorphosis started with an infatuation with power and its trappings, or the discovery of a native genius for arranging the financial plan that would attract the maximum investment of other people's capital. The author assures us that his genius was unique, or almost unique; nor could anyone know he had it until he met the historical moment when it could be used, just as Trotsky's military genius would have been forever unknown if he had had no civil war in which to exercise it. Anyone who found such a gift lying dormant within himself, like perfect pitch in the head of a man who never had heard music until he was thirty-five, would be bound to the exercise of it for the rest of his life. Thus: Ling.

The original Ling had faded into the new Ling—lost, at least for the time being, in grandiose ventures and assemblages, in which the subject matter of his companies' activities was less important than their ability to attract new investment, until that ability became less important than sheer size. Even the metamorphosed Ling disappears from the screen at the end of the book; his ultimate company shucked him and his name as well.

The second metamorphosis is that of the Ling companies. The original contracting company acquired other businesses in related fields. The new companies were bargains, either, as in one case, because a principal owner was suffering from a terminal illness and wanted to arrange his estate, or because the companies were expanding, but lacked Ling's ability to interest investment bankers in their potentialities. By 1959, Ling-affiliated companies were performing large electrical contracts on construction sites, manufacturing electronic devices used in military aircraft and naval projects, and designing and installing radio transmitters in successful competition with RCA.

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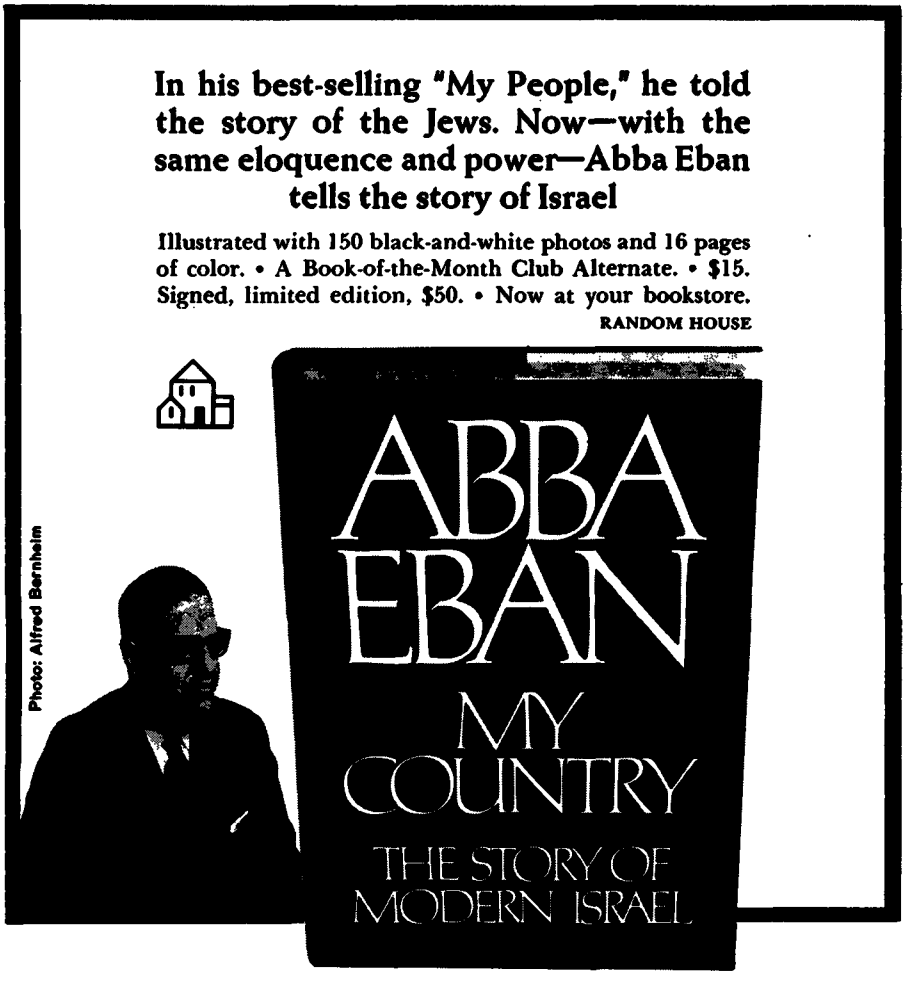

As THIS part of the story unwinds, there seems little reason to doubt that Ling was performing an important economic service (assuming that missiles and communications systems for Polaris submarines are important). His enterprise was able to work well with the government, was big enough to attract new investment for plant and engineering, and by almost any of the criteria which earnest appraisers might formulate to rate an economic achievement, the Ling companies would have scored high.

But somehow or other this happy picture had become wholly blurred by the time of Ling's exit from his own companies in 1970. By that year, his intricate corporate structure was a mess. His group had acquired Chance-Vought, a major manufacturer of military planes; the Okonite Company, which made copper cable without copper-producing facilities; Wilson & Company, the third largest meat-packing company in the United States, which also owned Wilson Sporting Goods and

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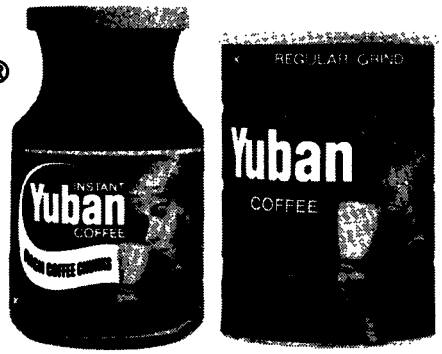

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Wilson Pharmaceuticals; the Greatamerica Insurance Company, which owned Braniff Airlines; and finally, the Jones & Laughlin Steel Company, which was the biggest single acquisition ($425 million) ever engineered before in American economic history. The Jones & Laughlin acquisition stung Nixon's Justice Department into action. (Nixon, incidentally, is described on several occasions in this book by Texas millionaires as the current equivalent of "traitor to his class.")

To begin with, the companies had little in common. In fact, many of them were useful only if they could be not only conglomerated but deglomerated. Ling had stumbled on two fascinating discoveries. First, that the parts are greater separately than they are together. Each of his companies issued its own stock, a majority of which the central company held. If the stock that was outstanding in public hands rose in price, the central Ling HQ was able to increase its debt because the collateral it could offer (its stock in what would usually be called subsidiaries) was more valuable than it had been or showed on the HQ books. By 1969, Ling's companies *owed* over $1 billion. Secondly, Ling discovered that if he convinced people to buy convertible debentures, and these went down on the stock market, he could buy them in cheaply below par by selling off other assets for cash. Thus he, in all legal honesty, borrowed money from people with the intention of paying it back at 60 or 70 cents on the dollar.

But the most significant change was that the companies had become unmanageable. Each brought into HQ its own president and staff, its own habits and trained personnel, its own subject matter. The major executives who teamed up with Ling—those who had accepted his stock for theirs—became more and more interested in running the day-to-day operations of all of these enterprises. As a team they were as harmonious as the Security Council, as polyglot technically as the General Assembly, and all together they turned financial profits about as unimpressively as the United Nations. How or why this should have happened to the Ling businesses—and at what point it began to happen—remains, despite the clarity of Mr. Brown's work—or perhaps because of it—an enigma. Had the companies been lucky originally? Or had something gone wrong which was related only to the size and the method of acquisition? These questions must be left for the business schools to complete, though Mr. Brown has carried them as far as the light takes him.

FINALLY, we have the metamorphosis of the investment banking business in the life of Mr. Ling. Ling's initial effort in creating an effective electrical-contracting and electronic-manufacturing com-

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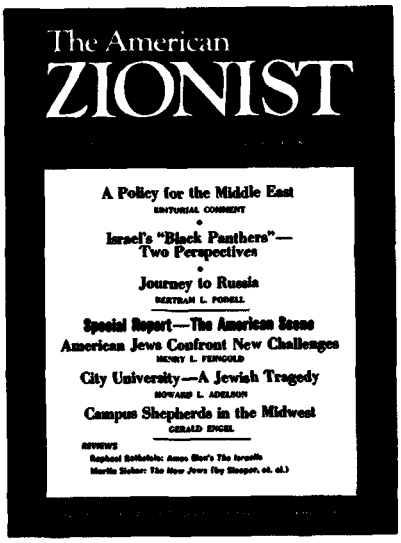

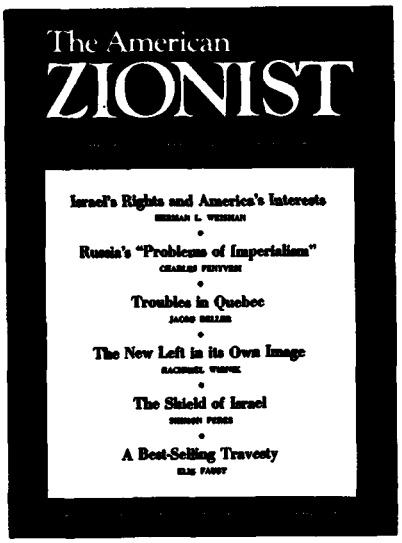

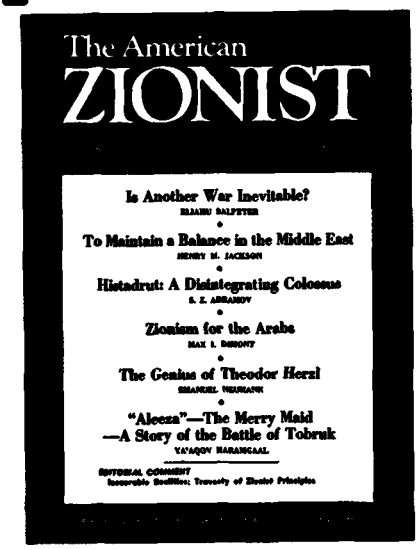

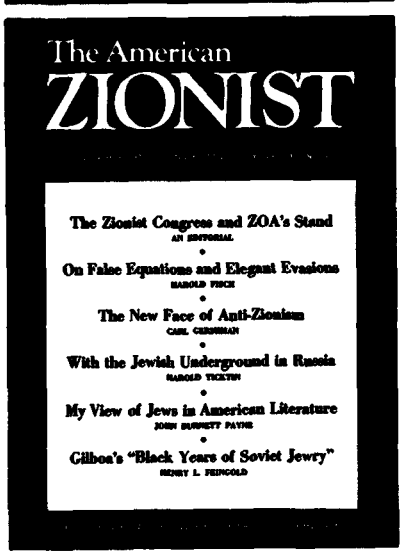

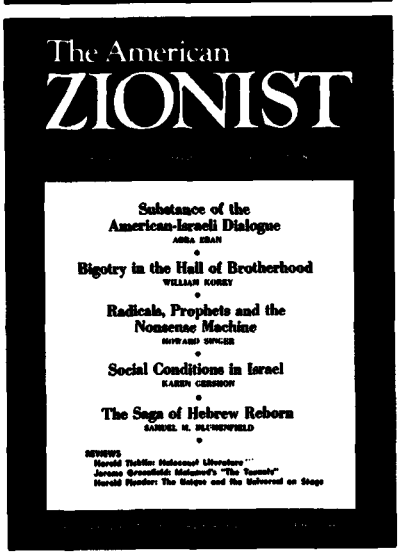

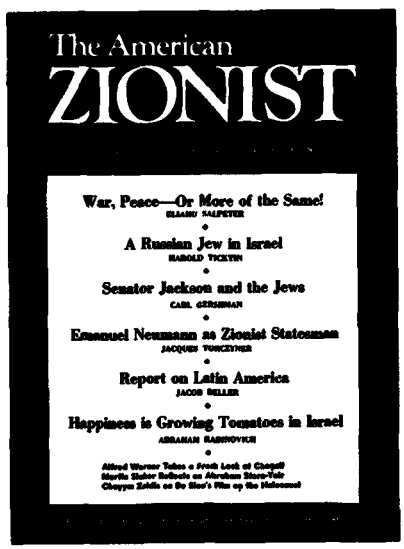

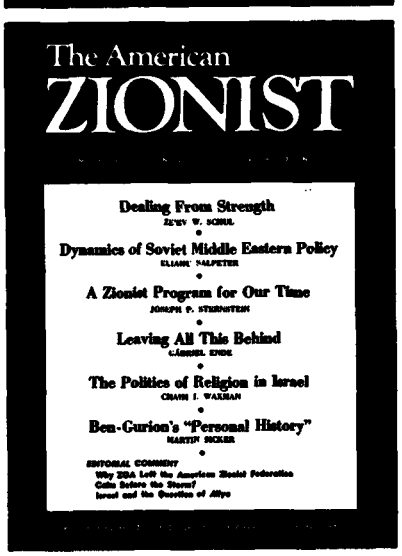

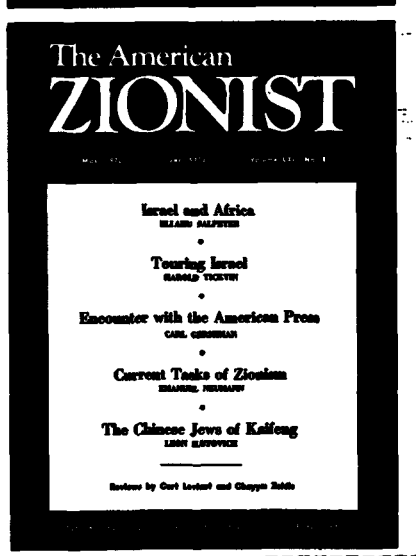

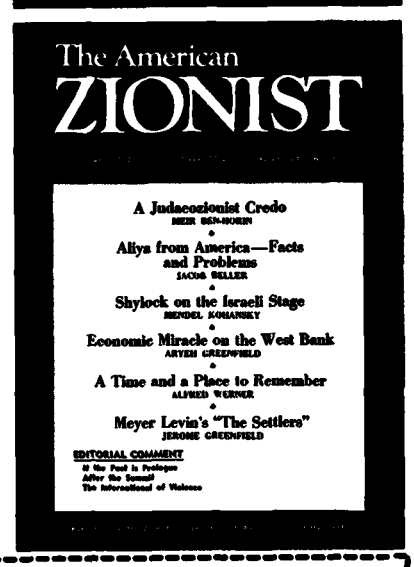

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pany was successful largely because of the role played by investment bankers. The flexibility with which one firm in particular responded to the need for capital gives the reader some reason to feel encouraged about a system of private investment capital and allocation of resources. The firm saw the possibilities of a combination which would make basic production and distribution economies. They saw certain types of investors—in this case, university endowment funds—who might be interested in participating in such a venture at an early stage. They placed $2.2 million in convertible debentures with a group of universities; within a few years, the university endowments had been able to convert the debentures into common stock at $10 per share (the conversion price) while the stock was selling on the market at a high of $44 per share. Presumably the profits remained in the endowment funds, helping the universities to meet the extraordinary costs of providing higher education in an inflationary period.

There is the possibility, however, that the universities did not take their profits and sell the stock or debentures at their high. Because sometime afterward, the interest of the investment community in Ling's affairs changed. The original firm, White, Weld & Co., dropped out of the picture because it was uninterested in helping Ling acquire a majority stock interest in a major military aircraft company. But other firms soon took its place. Brown describes the process thus: "At first some Wall Street people scoffed . . . but, win or lose, the buying would generate a lot of commissions, so they agreed to go along with the effort."

FROM then on, the main interest taken by Wall Street firms in Ling's enterprises centered on the amount of commissions and finders' fees his ingenuity could generate. As acquisition followed acquisition, vast millions of dollars were advanced on a temporary basis by some of the nation's largest banks to enable Ling to purchase the stocks of the companies he wanted, pending the arrangement of permanent financing. This permanent financing was arranged partly by the sale of stocks in subsidiaries, partly by sales-and-leaseback deals, partly by the dubious practice of reimporting dollar accounts in Europe. This last practice was barred to banks by the Federal Reserve Board; as a result, European banking houses collaborated in the work. No one seems to have worried over whether the final combination of companies could be effectively operated, or whether there was a serious economic advantage in the conglomeration. The only issue was that underwriting was profitable because people could be found to buy the securities, that banks which made temporary loans would be rewarded with fees as registrars and transfer agents, and that a way had been found around the regulations against speculative margin loans, forbidden to smaller investors but apparently open to Ling and his colleagues.

IN THE end a terrible price was paid for the bad judgment of the investment bankers in supporting Ling's ravenous acquisitions, but the price was paid by those who bought the securities they offered rather than by the investment bankers themselves. In the current widespread criticism of the corporate acquisitors like Ling, probably too much criticism has been directed at the Lings and too little at the investment bankers and the commercial banks who make the acquisitions possible. There is a difference between the constructive role played by those who help finance a useful combination of industrial elements into a new whole, and the destructiveness of those who exploit one man's vaunting ambitions to satisfy their own appetite for short-run profit. Unfortunately, it is difficult to draw the line where one role ends and the other begins except by remarking that it, the line, has something to do with human character. No one has shown more clearly than Stanley Brown that this quality is harder to find than investment capital.

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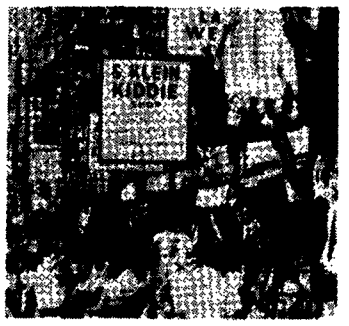

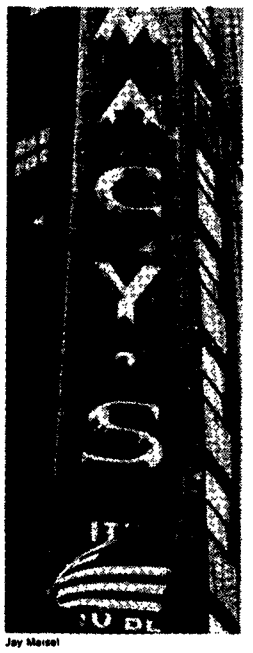

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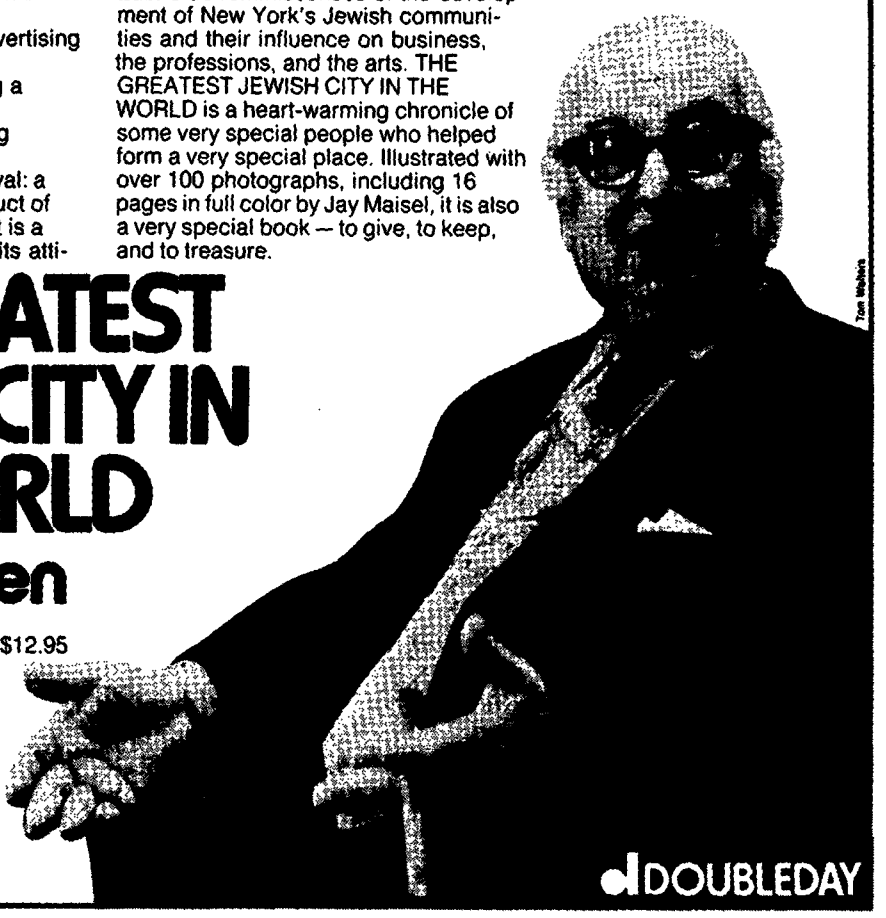

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Humanist

PHILOSOPHY AND HUMAN NATURE. By KATHLEEN NOTT. *New York University Press. 239 pp. $8.95.*
A SOUL IN THE QUAD. By KATHLEEN NOTT. *Routledge & Kegan Paul. 325 pp. $10.50.*

Reviewed by ALAN GOLDFEIN

MY FIRST reaction to Sartre's *La Nausée* was inadequacy and guilt. Try as I would, it was impossible for me to experience the nausea at the daily confrontation of environment which gagged the great existentialist. Bad faith! Mine must be a personality pitifully penned in by bad faith. That would certainly be the Sartrean condemnation. I became miserable because I could not experience authentic misery. Of course, I was only twenty at the time. But a few years later a friend of mine who was a graduate student in philosophy showed me the first draft of her Ph.D. dissertation. It was to a large extent about unicorns: if it is stated that "The unicorn experienced nausea today" (this, by the way, is *not* the predicate my friend used), can we say that the quantification of those five words represents a fact? Well, facts ought to be observable—or verifiable—if we are to be scientific; and we know that unicorns do not exist. So there is a problem. It was impossible to say that the statement was true, and it was even impossible to say that it was false (whether truth or fiction really mattered is another question). Perhaps we could say it was irrelevant. My friend (it is relevant here to say) has recently shifted her field of interest to ethics.

Kathleen Nott's foremost intention in *Philosophy and Human Nature* is to call for a reestablishment of relevance in British and American philosophy—where the heavy hand of Wittgensteinian linguistic analysis has held a firm grip for over forty years. Miss Nott would like to make it into Moral Philosophy. The problem that my friend and I had in the above cases (and in Sartre's case too) was that we are all used to observing the world as "knowers," detached from the "known." This, she says, is a consequence of the 17th-century Cartesian split. Simply, it is the separation of "me" from what is outside of me, of mind from matter, of idealism from materialism, and of metaphysics from behaviorism or linguistic analysis. It is, in effect, responsible for the basic epistemological assumption of modern science, and consequently for that *sine qua non* of scientific method, objectivity. Miss Nott argues for a recognition of subjectivity, of a unity between knower and known, and ultimately of a philosophy which would critically evaluate society.

To draw from our case of the unicorn: if someone says that "The unicorn experienced nausea today," he might be using the unicorn metaphorically, as animation of obsession, or as representation of someone—enemy, friend, lover. The nausea may mean explicitly *that*, nausea; or it may symbolize some other (less graphic) unpleasant feeling. The speaker may be smiling when he makes his declaration, he may be crying. The meaning of the word "unicorn" may be known by a select group, or by an entire culture. There is thus a certain degree of art, or of poetic sensibility, involved in its interpretation. It might even be possible for one who understands to tell the speaker that it was good that the unicorn was nauseated. Or bad. The statement, then, is not irrelevant. In other words, it is important to see behavior organically; first, as the behavior of a person, and then of that person in action and reaction with his environment—including his own history and the history of his environment as well. Using language objectively—viewing it from across the chasm of the Cartesian split—as detached data, does not accomplish this.

An attack upon the strongholds is not new to Miss Nott. She has been a champion of what she calls "humane liberalism" for a long time. In *The Emperor's Clothes* (1956) she attacked the dogmatic

ALAN GOLDFEIN *reviewed* Science and Sentiment in America *by Morton White in September.*

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religious orthodoxy of T. S. Eliot and his neo-scholastics for their narrowing of the field of vision and rationality in poetry. As early as 1958 she struck out as a "Gallant Old Girl" against what is now called male chauvinism. And in the early 60's she injected herself into the Two-Cultures controversy by taking C. P. Snow to task for what she considered the administrative and technological inclination of his mind. (She has even found the time to write novels and a few volumes of poetry.) If called upon to make a declaration as to just what Kathleen Nott's main vocation is, I would find it difficult to settle upon any one. Cultural watchdog might well be a phrase to describe her; but I will settle for humanist. For technocracy, depersonalization, reductionism, authoritarianism—call "it" what you will—this is her enemy. "Even behaviorist psychological experimenters. . . ," she says, "know a rat not as a specimen of Rattus Rattus but as James or Janie"; so why not human beings? *Philosophy and Human Nature* is assuredly part of the "literature of freedom and dignity" which B. F. Skinner feels has constructed an obstacle to total behavioristic solutions of all human problems.

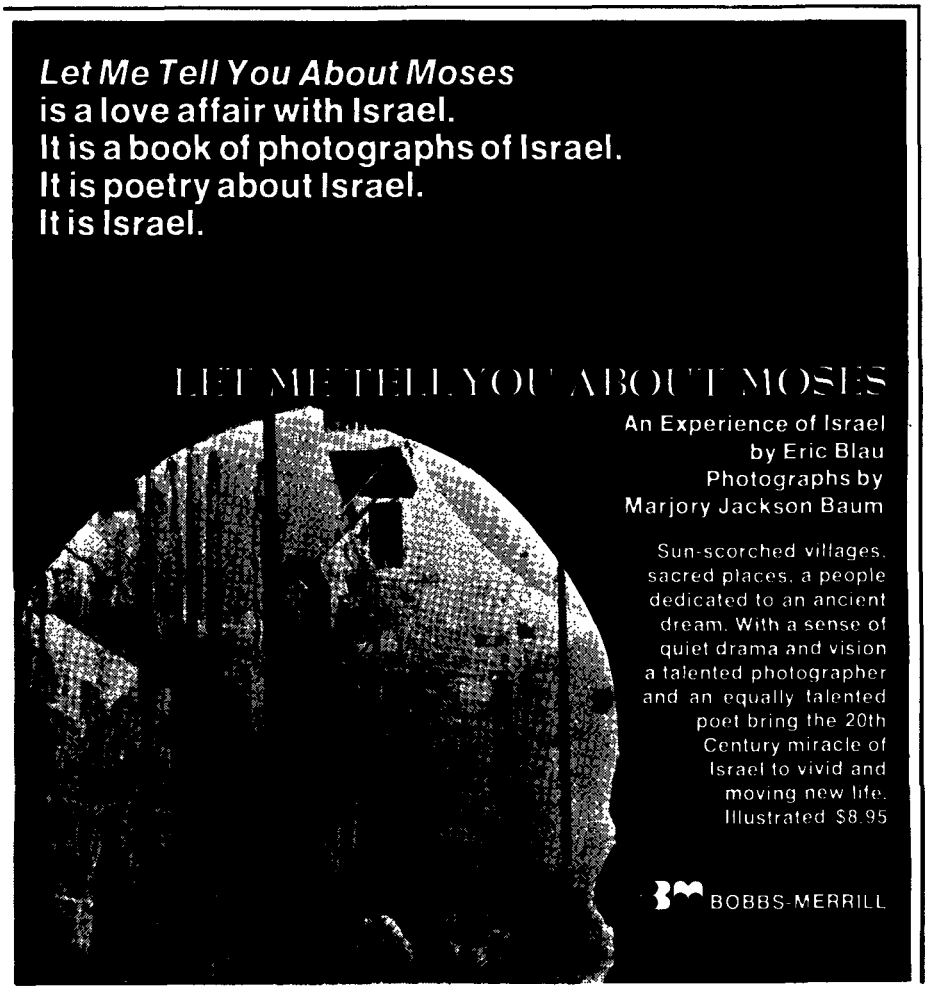
What Miss Nott says about establishment philosophy is not particularly new. There have been critics of the unrealistic premises of linguistic analysis for as long as that approach has been around. Miss Nott herself acknowledges indebtedness to more professional writers: to Michael Polanyi, for instance; and, to dig back a bit into the past, to Charles Peirce and R. G. Collingwood. Hers is a synthesis of their approaches. Philosophy should proceed by way of a unification of theory with practice:

> We think in order to act and our actions reflexively make us what we are and think. We do not think just for the purpose of producing impeccable statements.

Recognition should be made that there is no absolute homeostatic condition—i.e., simple "behavior"; that humanity and its institutions lie underneath it, and they are continuously evolving. Essentially it is a teleological approach whereby the individual is open to choose among alternatives. It allows identity, freedom, responsibility.

What is new about *Philosophy and Human Nature* is that it is being written by a layman. And what is important about it is that it is still a scholarly work, not at all pop-culture technophobia. Miss Nott displays a broad range of knowledge in the field, and she is able to apply her philosophical view to sociology, biology, psychology, and scientific method; toward an establishment of a "fundamental unity of cultural outlook." This latter synthesis—or at least a movement toward it—is her own special contribution. The fact that Miss Nott could write this book is significant evidence that philosophy may still be able to extricate itself from the esoterics of unicorns and specialized, piecemeal, protocol statements, and return to the understandable concepts of person, of human being, and to making judgments about real ethical matters—like life. Underlying all of Kathleen Nott's work has been the humanistic attempt to heal that old 17th-century rift between science and sensibility. She feels that "Philosophy belongs more to literature than to science, being an art of inquiry."

But *Philosophy and Human Nature* is not literature. It fails here because words can become an obstacle when "unity of cultural outlook" is a goal. Different people are familiar with different words, different syntaxes, and this book seems to be intended for a varied audience. It is scholarly, but it is not directed specifically at the professional philosopher or psychologist. But not so many laymen have the requisite conceptual tool kit (or the tenacity, I'm afraid) to handle it. So there is this questionability of direction; and it leads Miss Nott into an occasional Heraclitean flux of semantics and into some organizational disarray as well. She will begin with a broadly based cul-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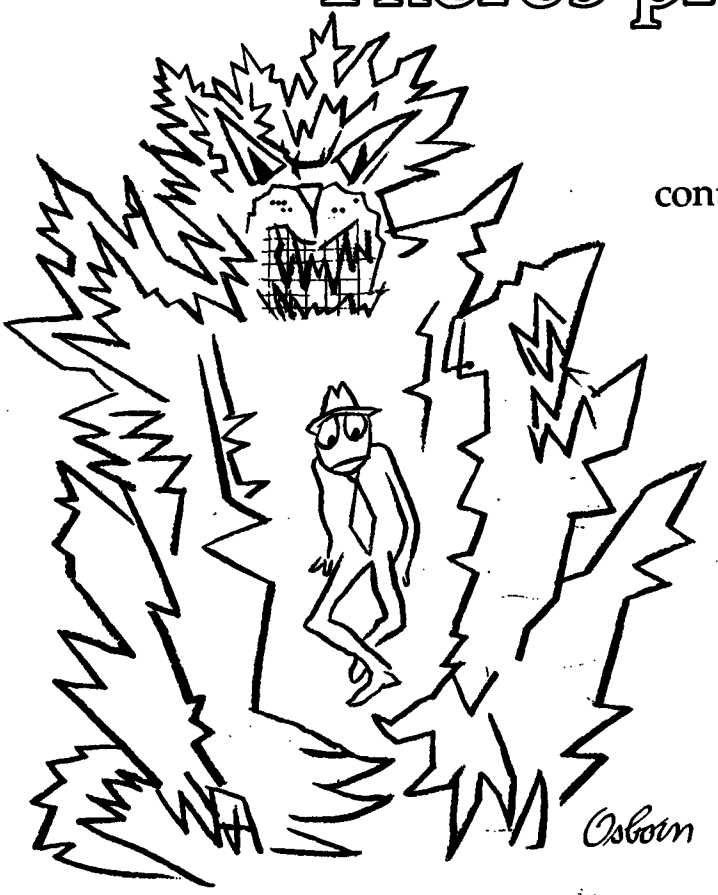

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tural chapter, lamenting the McLuhanistic mass-media world with its undermining of the communication among scholars; and soon after she will find herself proceeding into a difficult exposition of the epistemological assumptions and implications of linguistics and behaviorism. It seems that she is unsure when to be simple and when (and how) to be advanced, without risking the loss of one or another half of her potential audience. Historical backtracks and analogical sidetracks consequently abound. And there is an uncharacteristic—for Miss Nott—sloppiness with words. "Quantification," "statistical," and "collectivistic" especially are used in a pejorative fashion—as enemies of a humane scientific approach, though certainly there is nothing inherently wrong with any of those words on their own.

And now about that other intended unity—of theory and practice. Here is mostly theory, mostly argument. We are given descriptions of Charles Peirce's pragmatic reasonableness, his method of fixing belief, and of Michael Polanyi's advocacy of moral and aesthetic explorers who will be able to guide the value systems and approaches toward discovery in the sciences. And this is about all we are given. There is no concrete example to follow. Miss Nott subscribes to a variety of the action views that came to be associated with pragmatism, but she gives us no action. She does not *do* moral philosophy.

PERHAPS this is too much to expect from a book which is attempting to extricate British and American philosophy from its quiet "self-liquidation" in the darkness of the ivory tower. But there is a vague uneasiness reflected by my "perhaps," because I find an interesting kind of circularity at work. It is only logical that if one commits oneself to a philosophy which sees behavior holistically, one has taken a stand for Political, or Moral, Philosophy. And, from that position, it makes sense that one will advocate a particular *kind* of polity, as the one which best allows for the fulfillment of the principles of one's philosophy. In Miss Nott's case, the principle and the policy are liberalism. The danger here is that self-fulfillment can lead to a certain kind of non-doing, and to a certain paradox. Karl Mannheim pointed out (in *Ideology and Utopia*, his classical work on the sociology of knowledge) how it is not unusual in the stance of the underdog for one to identify *being* a practitioner with simply *calling* for a particular practice. This confusion reflects one of the basic differences between ideology—which is established—and utopia, which is defined as fighting for establishment. The fight becomes a substitute for the content. The paradox is that Miss Nott seems to look toward Michael Polanyi's society of explorers as the role model for philosophers. But this forces her to flirt with an illiberal, oligarchic position. Where Polanyi stressed mutuality (every man his own explorer), Miss Nott rests the hopes of culture on philosophy, and of philosophy on the rare (and, I suspect, on the *poetic*) individual. This inconsistency is evidence that she, herself, has not yet come all the way down to Peirce's "reasonable" earth where theory and practice merge. Perhaps her next book will be more than an admirable argument for moral philosophy. Perhaps it will *be* moral philosophy—and then maybe it will be literature.

INDEED, it is regrettable (and mystifying) that *A Soul in the Quad*—a book which comes closer to the stiff standards which I believe Miss Nott sets for herself and others—has only now become available in this country, though it was published in England in 1969. The book is appropriately titled, for its theme is indeed *soul*: the soul of poetry—as the saving grace of language, and therefore as the best expression of morality, freedom, truth. And the quad is, of course, all that rhetorical stuff of the 20th-century intellectual world, arched in superimposed ideology and impersonal abstraction. It has been manufactured by those "oedipal engineers" and "cosmic fatalists" ("cosmic and oedipal fatalist" she reserves for a special person: Marshall McLu-

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han) who view the world from across the false, but by now familiar, chasm left gaping by the Cartesian split. And it is populated by "Omeganthrope"—the mystic Point Omegan of Teilhard de Chardin, "Homo Huxliensis" (Sir Julian) and his World Brain, the "Abominable [C. P.] Snow-Man," the "committed" objectivist existentialist of Sartre, and other "New Men" of the "collectivistic and futuristic spirit."

Well, clever as all of this is, it is also old hat for readers of Kathleen Nott. But now even the novel is shown susceptible of abstraction and falsification. For, like philosophy or sociology or psychology, it is prose, and is therefore manipulable into rhetoric. D. H. Lawrence, Miss Nott says, universalizes his own particular obsessions about male domination (in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *Women in Love*: "'he for god only, she for god in him'"), and so distorts reality. Joyce Cary, on the other hand, in *The Horse's Mouth*, creates a rogue in the person of Gulley Jimson who treats women horribly, and is always a rogue; but his behavior is not generalized as the way it is and always must be between men and women. Gulley may dominate and deceive females, but if he does, it is because he is Gulley, not Man. The important point here—all question of Lawrence's intersexual authenticity aside—is that Cary has achieved the ability to portray free human existence, or "the concrete universal," *despite* his medium. For, to Kathleen Nott, it is in poetry that expression best mirrors the way we subjectively and spontaneously and sympathetically perceive. A poem invokes by rhythms and images, it combines the feeling with the thought, and it does not attempt to go beyond that—to utility, to argument, to coercion. Poetry is "a final but not a naive simplicity." It is ultimately personal, and liberating, in that it "invites us to see for ourselves." And so it is the best language of morality—"the best words in their best order."

But—and now we are back at the paradox of *Philosophy and Human Nature*—best for what? For perception, poetry likely is the best medium. But what about *re*ception? I am not so sure that the concrete universal of poetry can make it here, and I am afraid that in its war against the idols of the quad, Miss Nott's soul has again found itself enlisting an elite corps as aid. It is fine to state that the poetic is the best medium of expression, but when expression is the nucleus of one's moral philosophy, and when that philosophy happens to be humane liberalism, such a statement does flirt with exclusivity. Perhaps it is even because poetry comes so close to picturing reality—which is at bottom private and subjective—that it can often be an enigma outside the senses that created it (as in "The unicorn experienced nausea today"). Certainly, even though each man must learn to think for himself—to be his own moral philosopher—he must also be able, for the sake of civilization, to say something to the world about his thoughts. Even if that something has to come out in a language which is abstract particular (the opposite of concrete universal). Miss Nott does allow herself this latitude by writing rhetoric—she admits this herself in her closing lines.

A Soul in the Quad may not be "the best words in their best order," but it is nonetheless a clearer and a much better organized work than *Philosophy and Human Nature*. This is because it has a natural center—language—out of which Miss Nott is able to project her recurring theme of subjectivity. And though it does corner itself chasing down the problem of communication, it also succeeds at no small task: that of showing that a book about words and their relationship to philosophical problems may be witty, and need not be a narrow, piecemeal, and obtuse effort. Miss Nott calls *A Soul in the Quad* her magnum opus, and it is certain that had she been able to rely upon it, knowing that she had laid the groundwork for her American audience, *Philosophy and Human Nature* would have been able to be more directly pointed, and therefore a better (less "rhetorical") book.

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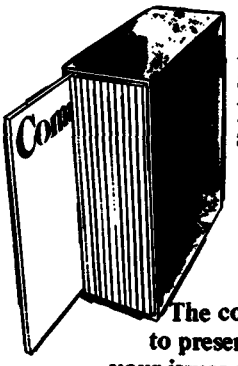

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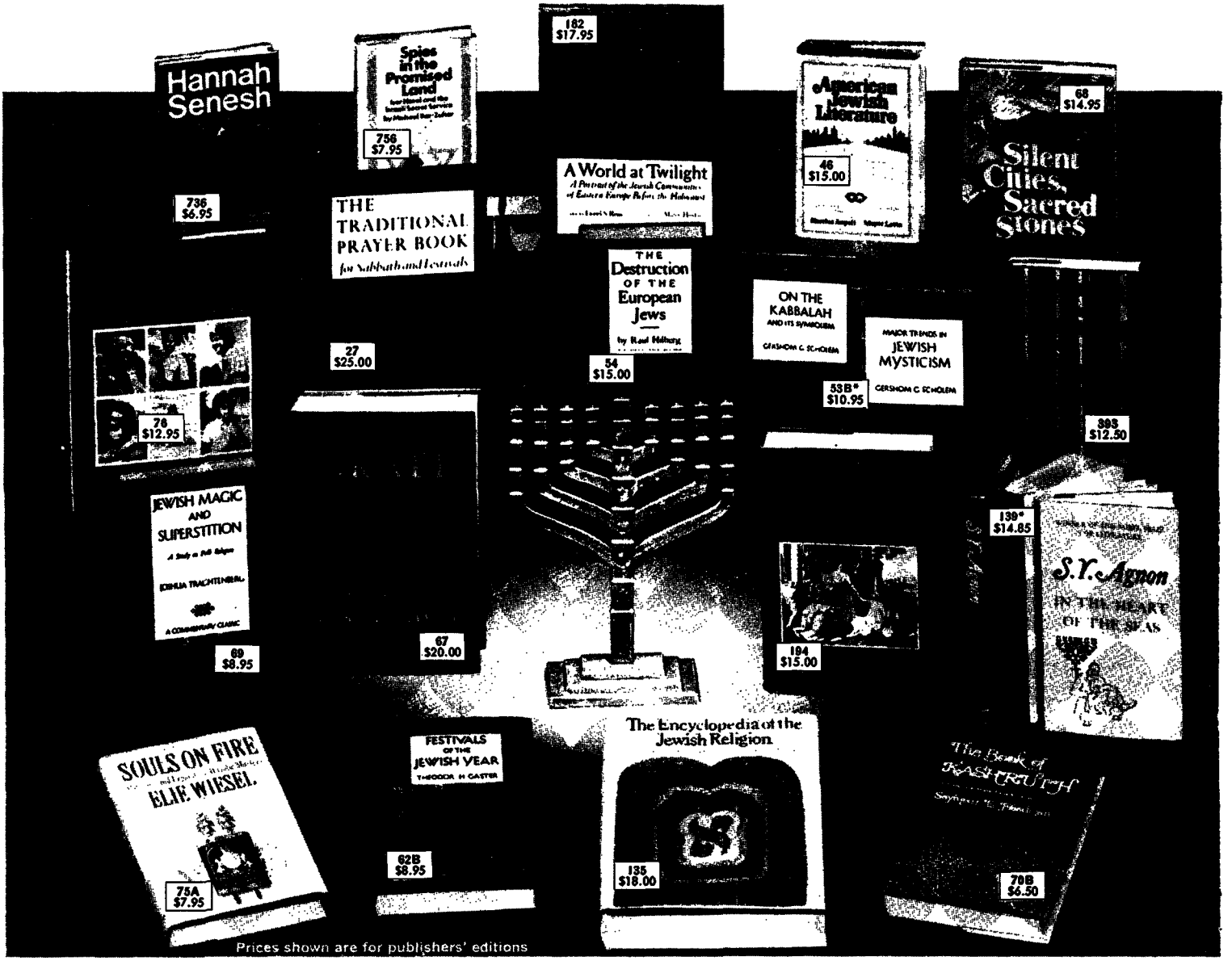

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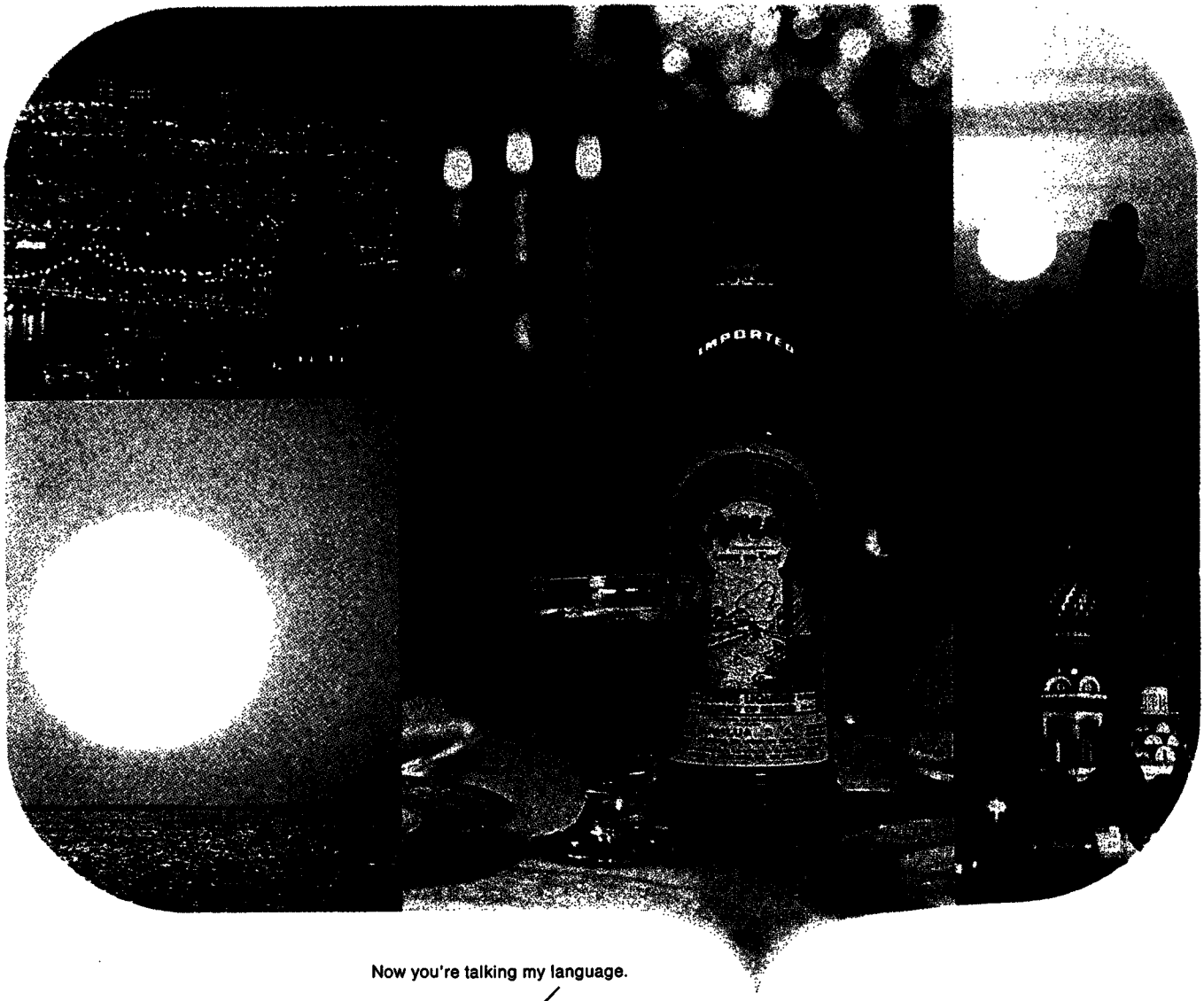

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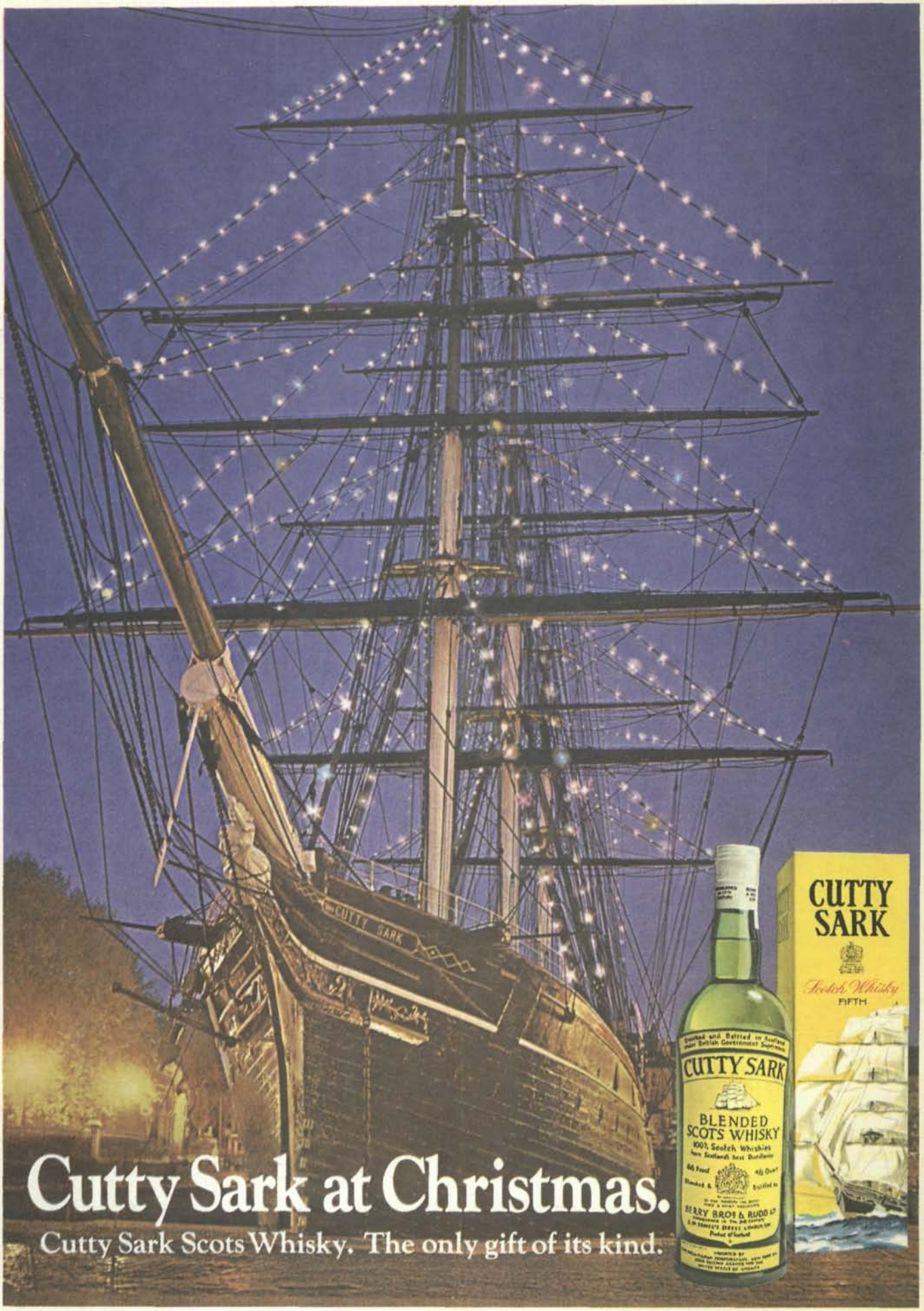

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